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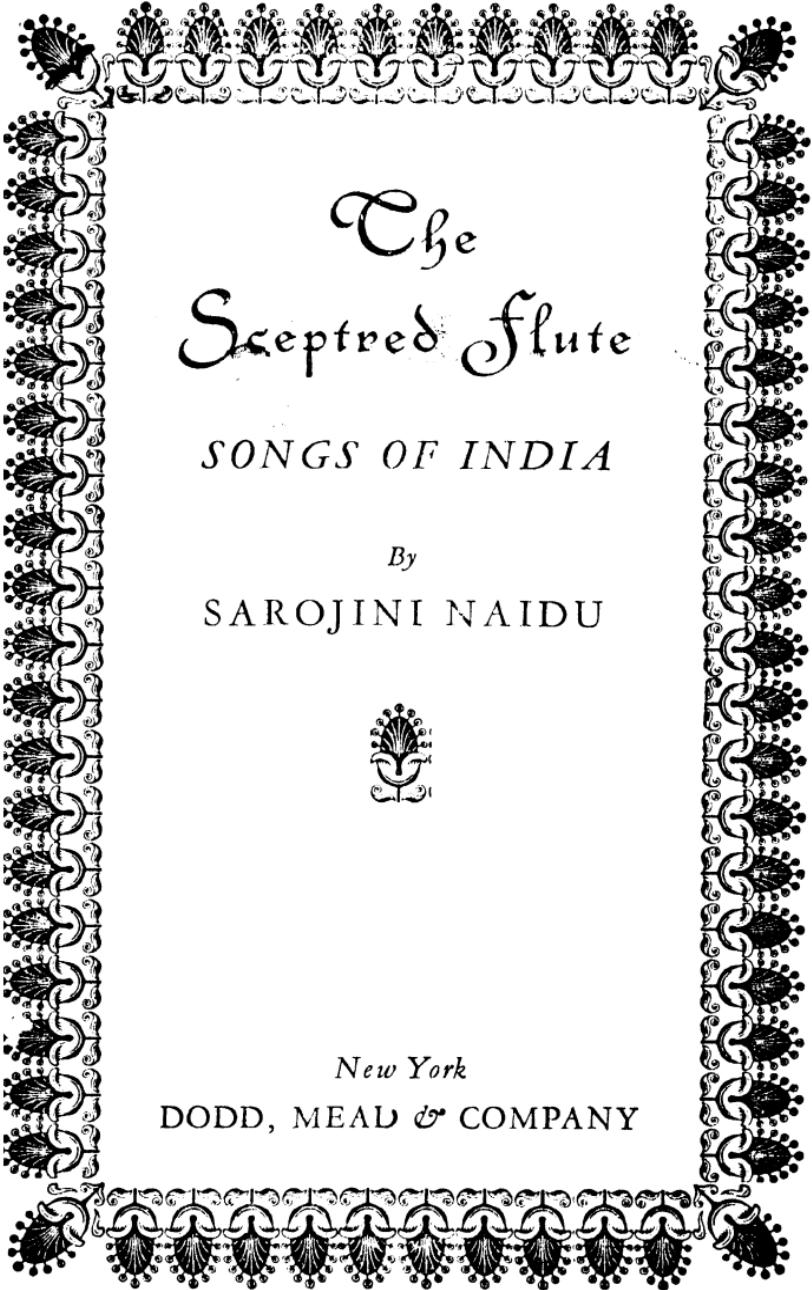
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The
Sceptred Flute

SONGS OF INDIA

By

SAROJINI NAIDU



New York

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION

When Dhan Gopal Mukerji suggested that I write the introduction to the collected poems of Sarojini Naidu, I leaped at the opportunity. I had long been familiar with the exquisite lyrical graces of that lovely poet of India and I was proud of the privilege of indirectly sponsoring her to the new American audience.

Mme Naidu is a small, vivid woman. Her hands are vital. Her eyes are liquid brown, luminous, electric. Her spirit kindles and communicates fire. And yet, astonishing as it may seem, she is essentially a tranquil personality; she has achieved a certain serenity of spirit in which the turbulence of the heart and the turmoil of the senses are redeemed, are translated into music.

For this lady, who is conceded to be the greatest living poet of India, is, in spite of the apparent contradiction, a passionate philosopher. In this respect, she resembles the two most beloved of her poets, by her own confession, Shelley and Keats. She thinks with her nerves. She feels with her intellect. First and last, she is the lyric poet, the singer of songs. Like Keats, she has suffered ill

health almost all of her life. We detect this in a certain strange feverishness of texture. Her poems flush. We touch heat.

It is really remarkable what this woman has done not only in poetry but in the multifarious business of living. She has always been an independent person. As a very young woman she defied the bonds of caste by her marriage. She is the mother of four children. She has been President of the Indian National Congress. And with all these activities and through all her physical sufferings she has continued to be the singer of beautiful songs.

In fact, it is the poet in Mme Naidu that motivates the mother, the politician, the person. When Arthur Symonds some years ago introduced Sarojini Naidu to the English public, he talked of the "bird like quality" of her poems. He mentioned the Eastern magic in them. He quoted from a letter of hers to him: "I am not a poet really. I have the vision and the desire but not the voice. If I could write just one poem full of beauty and the spirit of greatness, I should be exultantly silent for ever; but I sing just as the birds do and my songs are as ephemeral."

But Sarojini Naidu was mistaken. If she sings as the birds do, she sings out of a darker passion. She has more to say than the birds and her song is not ephemeral. For that matter, neither is the bird's

song. It is no more transitory than truth and her bird music is always true. She never writes for the mere sake of writing. There is no artifice in her poetry. She sings from the heart.

Descended from an ancient family of scholars and mystics, she is herself a scholar and a mystic. Somewhere in one of her letters she writes: "My ancestors for thousands of years have been lovers of the forest and mountain caves, great dreamers, great scholars, great ascetics. My father is a dreamer himself, a great dreamer, a great man whose life has been a magnificent failure. . . . He has a great white beard and the profile of Homer, and a laugh that brings the roof down. He has wasted all his money on two great objects: to help others, and on alchemy. He holds huge courts every day in his garden of all the learned men of all religions—Rajahs and beggars and saints and downright villains—all delightfully mixed up, and all treated as one. And then his alchemy! Oh dear, night and day the experiments are going on, and every man who brings a new prescription is as welcome as a brother. But this alchemy is, you know, only the material counterpart of a poet's craving for Beauty, the Eternal Beauty. 'The makers of gold and the makers of verse,' they are the twin creators that sway the world's great desire for mystery; and what in my father is the genius of curi-

osity—in me is the desire for beauty. Do you remember Pater's phrase about Leonardo da Vinci, 'Curiosity and the desire of beauty'?"

And so we have the woman and the poet all at once!

There is her method and her formula. She is always engaged in the quest for beauty, always turning the stuff of the world into gold. She is consumed with curiosity about everything. She has a brilliant mind, a mind that flashes like lightning; she drinks "large draughts of intellectual day." She is always asking questions, always wondering, always wanting. She apprehends all loveliness with a certain delicate, trembling, snail-horn perception of truth, displaying somehow a wisdom older than her race, the wisdom that comes to the poet who is tremendously the woman. She has capacity for intense anguish and intense ecstasy.

When her cherished friend, Edmund Gosse, fathered her first frail fugitive notes and by sagacious and sensitive advice led the young poet of the Deccan across "the golden threshold" he felt that she was going to be the most accomplished living poet among her people, "at least, of those who write in English." Unlike her great compatriot and fellow craftsman, Tagore, she sings directly in English; in fact English, she tells us, is more naturally her mother tongue than Hindustani. What the songs which Tagore creates are like in their original

patterns, how they really sound as songs in the mouths of his people, we cannot know. But in translation they lose something, they lose that something which Sarojini Naidu's poems possess—the sense of lyrical and balanced structure. With the direct simplicity of Tagore, with a good deal of his fixed contemplation, Mme Naidu's poems are more beautiful and spontaneous poems in the English sense of the word than his. If she is more sorrowful than he, she is also more joyful. If in one mood, and, it must be confessed, a frequent mood, she sings:

“But I, O Love, am like a withered leaf
Burnt in devouring noon tides of distress
And tossed upon dim pools of weariness
Mute to the winds of gladness or of grief!”

she can also, in another mood, sing a love song more deep, more intense than any in Tagore:

“Love, I am yours to lie in your breast like a flower,
Or burn like a weed for your sake in the flame of
hell.”

Although the poems in her later volumes, “The Bird of Time” and “The Broken Wing,” reveal in their somberer and more sonorous music a fiercer intimacy with bereavement and grief and despair, both personal and national, they have never quite

lost, however, a certain radiant delight, a quivering "agony of sensation" in beauty, a species of spiritual mirth almost insolent in its triumph over pain. O purgative and compassionate laughter! Always this gift of laughter has been hers. In a noble sonnet to her father, Sarojini Naidu speaks of him as a "mystic jester," that Homeric father whose laughter brought the roof down. She too is a mystic jester, laughing, as a mere slip of a girl, at her body's weakness, laughing at the excitement caused by her passing the Matriculation of the Madras University when she was twelve years old, laughing with that humour which is so inextricably a part of her wisdom; a mask perhaps, on occasion, but a critical mask which permits the mind to see more clearly what the heart can scarcely endure. So she can—and does—laugh at her own rhapsodies and enthusiasms as honestly as she has, a moment since, indulged them. "Of all things," she exclaims in one of her exuberant letters, "of all things that life or perhaps my temperament has given me I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price."

It was as inevitable as it was natural that this ardent spirit should, sooner or later, turn to the sufferings of her India and pour herself out in exhortation and in action. In her closing address to the Fortieth National Congress, Mme Naidu cried out: "As long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the

cause of freedom. Come, my general! Come, my soldiers! I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman I give to you the weapons of faith and courage and the shield of fortitude. And as a poet, I fling out the banner of song and sound, the bugle call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery!"

There is the proper voice of a descendant of sages and warriors, the offspring of Shelley's burning soul! Even in her very first little book, "The Golden Threshold," we find that heroic quality, that passion for liberty which the poets have always kept alive. She calls upon India:

"O young through all thy immemorial years!
Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,
And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
Beget new glories from thine ageless womb!"

This is hardly the India of Laurence Hope or Katherine Mayo. But it is the true India. For if we would know the truth about India, as about all things, we must go to the poets. And here, at last, is a poet who shall tell us.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER

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THE GOLDEN THRESHOLD
FOLK SONGS

PALANQUIN-BEARERS

LIGHTLY, O lightly, we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

WANDERING SINGERS

(Written to one of their Tunes)

WHERE the voice of the wind calls our wandering
feet,

Through echoing forest and echoing street,
With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,
All men are our kindred, the world is our home.

Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed,
The laughter and beauty of women long dead;
The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,
And happy and simple and sorrowful things.

What hope shall we gather, what dreams shall we
sow?

Where the wind calls our wandering footsteps we
go.

No love bids us tarry, no joy bids us wait:
The voice of the wind is the voice of our fate.

INDIAN WEAVERS

WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,
Why do you weave a garment so gay? . . .
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,
We weave the robes of a new-born child.

Weavers, weaving at fall of night,
Why do you weave a garment so bright? . . .
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,
We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
What do you weave in the moonlight chill? . . .
White as a feather and white as a cloud,
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

COROMANDEL FISHERS

RISE, brothers, rise, the wakening skies pray to the
morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a
child that has cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore, and
set our *catamarans* free,
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we
are the sons of the sea.

No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track
of the sea-gull's call,
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the
waves are our comrades all.
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where
the hand of the sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in
his breast our lives.

Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the
scent of the mango grove,
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon
with the sound of the voices we love.

But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and
the dance of the wild foam's glee:
Row, brothers, row to the blue of the verge, where
the low sky mates with the sea.

THE SNAKE-CHARMER

WHITHER dost thou hide from the magic of my
flute-call?

In what moonlight-tangled meshes of perfume,
Where the clustering *keoras* guard the squirrel's
slumber,

Where the deep woods glimmer with the jasmine's
bloom?

I'll feed thee, O beloved, on milk and wild red
honey,

I'll bear thee in a basket of rushes, green and white,
To a palace-bower where golden-vested maidens
Thread with mellow laughter the petals of delight.

Whither dost thou loiter, by what murmuring hol-
lows,

Where oleanders scatter their ambrosial fire?
Come, thou subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing,
Come, thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire!

CORN-GRINDERS

*O little mouse, why dost thou cry
While merry stars laugh in the sky?*

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
Ah, who will ease my bitter pain?
He went to seek a millet-grain
In the rich farmer's granary shed;
They caught him in a baited snare,
And slew my lover unaware . . .
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

*O little deer, why dost thou moan,
Hid in thy forest-bower alone?*

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
Ah! who will quiet my lament?
At fall of eventide he went
To drink beside the river-head;
A waiting hunter threw his dart
And struck my lover through the heart.
Alas! alas! my lord is dead. . . .

*O little bride, why dost thou weep
With all the happy world asleep?*

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
Ah, who will stay these hungry tears,
Or still the want of famished years,
And crown with love my marriage-bed?
My soul burns with the quenchless fire
That lit my lover's funeral pyre. . . .
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

VILLAGE-SONG

HONEY, child, honey, child, whither are you going?

Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?

Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?

Would you grieve the lover who is riding forth to wed you?

Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,

Where upon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;

To the köil-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten,

The voices of the fairy-folk are calling me, O listen!

Honey, child, honey, child, the world is full of pleasure,

Of bridal-songs and cradle-songs and sandal-scented leisure.

Your bridal robes are in the loom, silver and saffron glowing,

Your bridal cakes are on the hearth: O whither are
you going?

The bridal-songs and cradle-songs have cadences of
sorrow,

The laughter of the sun to-day, the wind of death
to-morrow.

Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest-
streams are falling;

O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy-folk are
calling.

IN PRAISE OF HENNA

A KOKILA called from a henna-spray:

Lira! liree! Lira! liree!

Hasten, maidens, hasten away

To gather the leaves of the henna-tree.

Send your pitchers afloat on the tide,

Gather the leaves ere the dawn be old,

Grind them in mortars of amber and gold,

The fresh green leaves of the henna-tree.

A kokila called from a henna-spray:

Lira! liree! Lira! liree!

Hasten maidens, hasten away

To gather the leaves of the henna-tree.

The *tilka*'s red for the brow of a bride,

And betel-nut's red for lips that are sweet;

But, for lily-like fingers and feet,

The red, the red of the henna-tree.

HARVEST HYMN

Men's Voices

LORD of the lotus, lord of the harvest,
Bright and munificent lord of the morn!
Thine is the bounty that prospered our sowing,
Thine is the bounty that nurtured our corn.
We bring thee our songs and our garlands for
tribute,
The gold of our fields and the gold of our fruit;
O giver of mellowing radiance, we hail thee,
We praise thee, O Surya, with cymbal and flute.

Lord of the rainbow, lord of the harvest,
Great and beneficent lord of the main!
Thine is the mercy that cherished our furrows,
Thine is the mercy that fostered our grain.
We bring thee our thanks and our garlands for
tribute,
The wealth of our valleys, new-garnered and ripe;
O sender of rain and the dewfall, we hail thee,
We praise thee, Varuna, with cymbal and pipe.

Women's Voices

Queen of the gourd flower, queen of the harvest,
Sweet and omnipotent mother, O Earth!
Thine is the plentiful bosom that feeds us,
Thine is the womb where our riches have birth.
We bring thee our love and our garlands for
tribute,
With gifts of thy opulent giving we come;
O source of our manifold gladness, we hail thee,
We praise thee, O Prithvi, with cymbal and drum.

All Voices

Lord of the Universe, Lord of our being,
Father eternal, ineffable Om!
Thou art the Seed and the Scythe of our harvests,
Thou art our Hands and our Heart and our Home.
We bring thee our lives and our labours for tribute,
Grant us thy succour, thy counsel, thy care.
O Life of all life and all blessing, we hail thee,
We praise thee, O Brahma, with cymbal and
prayer.

INDIAN LOVE-SONG

She

LIKE a serpent to the calling voice of flutes,
Glides my heart into thy fingers, O my Love!
Where the night-wind, like a lover, leans above
His jasmine-gardens and *sirisha*-bowers;
And on ripe boughs of many-coloured fruits
Bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers.

He

Like the perfume in the petals of a rose,
Hides thy heart within my bosom, O my love!
Like a garland, like a jewel, like a dove
That hangs its nest in the asoka-tree.
Lie still, O love, until the morning sows
Her tents of gold on fields of ivory.

CRADLE-SONG

FROM groves of spice,
O'er fields of rice,
Athwart the lotus-stream,
I bring for you,
Aglint with dew
A little lovely dream.

Sweet, shut your eyes,
The wild fire-flies
Dance through the fairy *neem*;
From the poppy-bole
For you I stole
A little lovely dream.

Dear eyes, good-night,
In golden light
The stars around you gleam;
On you I press
With soft caress
A little lovely dream.

SUTTEE

LAMP of my life, the lips of Death
Hath blown thee out with their sudden breath;
Naught shall revive thy vanished spark . . .
Love, must I dwell in the living dark?

Tree of my life, Death's cruel foot
Hath crushed thee down to thy hidden root;
Nought shall restore thy glory fled . . .
Shall the blossom live when the tree is dead?

Life of my life, Death's bitter sword
Hath severed us like a broken word,
Rent us in twain who are but one . . .
Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?

SONGS FOR MUSIC

SONG OF A DREAM

ONCE in the dream of a night I stood
Lone in the light of a magical wood,
Soul-deep in visions that poppy-like sprang;
And spirits of Truth were the birds that sang,
And spirits of Love were the stars that glowed,
And spirits of Peace were the streams that flowed
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

Lone in the light of that magical grove,
I felt the stars of the spirits of Love
Gather and gleam round my delicate youth,
And I heard the song of the spirits of Truth;
To quench my longing I bent me low
By the streams of the spirits of Peace that flow
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

HUMAYUN TO ZOBEIDA

(*From the Urdu*)

You flaunt your beauty in the rose, your glory in
the dawn,

Your sweetness in the nightingale, your whiteness
in the swan.

You haunt my waking like a dream, my slumber
like a moon,

Pervade me like a musky scent, possess me like a
tune.

Yet, when I crave of you, my sweet, one tender
moment's grace,

You cry, "*I sit behind the veil, I cannot show my
face.*"

Shall any foolish veil divide my longing from my
bliss?

Shall any fragile curtain hide your beauty from my
kiss?

What war is this of *Thee* and *Me*? Give o'er the
wanton strife,

You are the heart within my heart, the life within
my life.

AUTUMN SONG

LIKE a joy on the heart of a sorrow,
The sunset hangs on a cloud;
A golden storm of glittering sheaves,
Of fair and frail and fluttering leaves,
The wild wind blows in a cloud.

Hark to a voice that is calling
To my heart in the voice of the wind:
My heart is weary and sad and alone,
For its dreams like the fluttering leaves have gone,
And why should I stay behind?

ALABASTER

LIKE this alabaster box whose art
Is frail as a cassia-flower, is my heart,
Carven with delicate dreams and wrought
With many a subtle and exquisite thought.

Therein I treasure the spice and scent
Of rich and passionate memories blent
Like odours of cinnamon, sandal and clove,
Of song and sorrow and life and love.

ECSTASY

COVER mine eyes, O my Love!

Mine eyes that are weary of bliss
As of light that is poignant and strong,
O silence my lips with a kiss,
My lips that are weary of song!

Shelter my soul, O my Love!

My soul is bent low with the pain
And the burden of love like the grace
Of a flower that is smitten with rain:
O shelter my soul from thy face!

TO MY FAIRY FANCIES

NAY, no longer I may hold you,
In my spirit's soft caresses,
Nor like lotus-leaves enfold you
In the tangles of my tresses.
Fairy fancies, fly away
To the white cloud-wildernesses,
Fly away!

Nay, no longer ye may linger
With your laughter-lighted faces,
Now I am a thought-worn singer
In life's high and lonely places.
Fairy fancies, fly away,
To bright wind-inwoven spaces,
Fly away!

POEMS

LEILI

THE serpents are asleep among the poppies,
The fireflies light the soundless panther's way
To tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying,
And parrot-plumes outshine the dying day.
O soft! the lotus-buds upon the stream
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

A caste-mark on the azure brows of Heaven,
The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright
The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of Night,
Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing
And make the gods their incense-offering.

IN THE FOREST

HERE, O my heart, let us burn the dear dreams that
are dead,
Here in this wood let us fashion a funeral pyre
Of fallen white petals and leaves that are mellow
and red,
Here let us burn them in noon's flaming torches of
fire.

We are weary, my heart, we are weary, so long we
have borne
The heavy loved burden of dreams that are dead,
let us rest,
Let us scatter their ashes away, for a while let us
mourn;
We will rest, O my heart, till the shadows are gray
in the west.

But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must
wander again
Into the war of the world and the strife of the
throng;

Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams
that remain,
We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow
of song.

PAST AND FUTURE

The new hath come and now the old retires:
And so the past becomes a mountain-cell,
Where lone, apart, old hermit-memories dwell
In consecrated calm, forgotten yet
Of the keen heart that hastens to forget
Old longings in fulfilling new desires.

And now the Soul stands in a vague, intense
Expectancy and anguish of suspense,
On the dim chamber-threshold . . . lo! he sees
Like a strange, fated bride as yet unknown,
His timid future shrinking there alone,
Beneath her marriage-veil of mysteries.

LIFE

CHILDREN, ye have not lived, to you it seems
Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams,
Or carnival of careless joys that leap
About your hearts like billows on the deep
In flames of amber and of amethyst.

Children, ye have not lived, ye but exist
Till some resistless hour shall rise and move
Your hearts to wake and hunger after love
And thirst with passionate longing for the things
That burn your brows with blood-red sufferings.

Till ye have battled with great grief and fears,
And borne the conflict of dream-shattering years,
Wounded with fierce desire and worn with strife,
Children, ye have not lived: for this is life.

THE POET'S LOVE-SONG

IN noon-tide hours, O Love, secure and strong,
I need thee not; mad dreams are mine to bind
The world to my desire, and hold the wind
A voiceless captive to my conquering song.
I need thee not, I am content with these:
Keep silence in thy soul, beyond the seas!

But in the desolate hour of midnight, when
An ecstasy of starry silence sleeps
On the still mountains and the soundless deeps,
And my soul hungers for thy voice, O then,
Love, like the magic of wild melodies,
Let thy soul answer mine across the seas.

TO THE GOD OF PAIN

UNWILLING priestess in thy cruel fane,
Long hast thou held me, pitiless god of Pain
Bound to thy worship by reluctant vows,
My tired breast girt with suffering, and my brows
Anointed with perpetual weariness.
Long have I borne thy service, through the stress
Of rigorous years, sad days and slumberless nights,
Performing thine inexorable rites.

For thy dark altars, balm nor milk nor rice,
But mine own soul thou'st ta'en for sacrifice:
All the rich honey of my youth's desire,
And all the sweet oils from my crushed life drawn,
And all my flower-like dreams and gem-like fire
Of hopes up-leaping like the light of dawn.

I have no more to give, all that was mine
Is laid, a wrested tribute, at thy shrine;
Let me depart, for my whole soul is wrung,
And all my cheerless orisons are sung;
Let me depart, with faint limbs let me creep
To some dim shade and sink me down to sleep.

THE SONG OF PRINCESS ZEB-UN-NISSA
IN PRAISE OF HER OWN BEAUTY

(From the Persian)

WHEN from my cheek I lift my veil,
The roses turn with envy pale,
 And from their pierced hearts, rich with pain,
Send forth their fragrance like a wail.

Or if perchance one perfumed tress
Be loosened to the wind's caress,
 The honeyed hyacinths complain,
And languish in a sweet distress.

And, when I pause, still groves among,
(Such loveliness is mine) a throng
 Of nightingales awake and strain
Their souls into a quivering song.

INDIAN DANCERS

EYES ravished with rapture, celestially panting,
what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens
that glimmer around them in fountains of
light;
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music
that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces be-
witch the voluptuous watches of night.

The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and
die in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,
And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the
poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet;
Their glittering garments of purple are burning
like tremulous dawns in the quivering air,
And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and
tread of their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swing-
ing, like blossoms that bend to the breezes or
showers,
Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they fal-

ter, and, lingering, languish in radiant choir;
Their jewel-girt arms and warm, wavering, lily-
long fingers enchant through melodious hours,
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,
what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire!

MY DEAD DREAM

HAVE you found me, at last, O my Dream? Seven
æons ago

You died and I buried you deep under forests of
snow.

Why have you come hither? Who bade you awake
from your sleep

And track me beyond the cerulean foam of the
deep?

Would you tear from my lintels these sacred green
garlands of leaves?

Would you scare the white, nested, wild pigeons of
joy from my eaves?

Would you touch and defile with dead fingers the
robes of my priest?

Would you weave your dim moan with the chant-
ings of love at my feast?

Go back to your grave, O my Dream, under for-
ests of snow,

Where a heart-riven child hid you once, seven æons
ago.

Who bade you arise from your darkness? I bid you
depart!

Profane not the shrines I have raised in the clefts
of my heart.

DAMAYANTE TO NALA IN THE HOUR OF EXILE

(A fragment)

SHALT thou be conquered of a human fate
My liege, my lover, whose imperial head
Hath never bent in sorrow of defeat?
Shalt thou be vanquished, whose imperial feet
Have shattered armies and stamped empires dead?
Who shall unking thee, husband of a queen?
Wear thou thy majesty inviolate.
Earth's glories flee of human eyes unseen,
Earth's kingdoms fade to a remembered dream,
But thine henceforth shall be a power supreme,
Dazzling command and rich dominion,
The winds thy heralds and thy vassals all
The silver-belted planets and the sun.
Where'er the radiance of thy coming fall,
Shall dawn for thee her saffron footcloths spread,
Sunset her purple canopies and red,
In serried splendour, and the night unfold
Her velvet darkness wrought with starry gold
For kingly raiment, soft as cygnet-down.
My hair shall braid thy temples like a crown

Of sapphires, and my kiss upon thy brows
Like çithar-music lull thee to repose,
Till the sun yield thee homage of his light.

O king, thy kingdom who from thee can wrest?
What fate shall dare uncrown thee from this
 breast,

O god-born lover, whom my love doth gird
And armour with impregnable delight
Of Hope's triumphant keen flame-carven sword?

THE QUEEN'S RIVAL

I

QUEEN GULNAAR sat on her ivory bed,
Around her countless treasures were spread;

Her chamber walls were richly inlaid
With agate, porphory, onyx and jade;

The tissues that veiled her delicate breast
Glowed with the hues of a lapwing's crest;

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

King Feroz bent from his ebony seat:
"Is thy least desire unfulfilled, O Sweet?

"Let thy mouth speak and my life be spent
To clear the sky of thy discontent."

"I tire of my beauty, I tire of this
Empty splendour and shadowless bliss;

“With none to envy and none gainsay,
No savour or salt hath my dream or day.”

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose:
“Give me a rival, O King Feroz.”

II

King Feroz spoke to his Chief Vizier:
“Lo! ere to-morrow’s dawn be here,

“Send forth my messengers over the sea,
To seek seven beautiful brides for me;

“Radiant of feature and regal of mien,
Seven handmaids meet for the Persian Queen.”

.
Seven new moon tides at the Vesper call,
King Feroz led to Queen Gulnaar’s hall

A young queen eyed like the morning star:
“I bring thee a rival, O Queen Gulnaar.”

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:
“O King, my heart is unsatisfied.”

Seven queens shone round her ivory bed,
Like seven soft gems on a silken thread,

Like seven fair lamps in a royal tower,
Like seven bright petals of Beauty's flower.

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose
"Where is my rival, O King Feroz?"

III

When spring winds wakened the mountain floods,
And kindled the flame of the tulip buds,

When bees grew loud and the days grew long,
And the peach groves thrilled to the oriole's song,

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed,
Decking with jewels her exquisite head;

And still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

Queen Gulnaar's daughter two spring times old,
In blue robes bordered with tassels of gold,

Ran to her knee like a wildwood fay,
And plucked from her hand the mirror away.

Quickly she set on her own light curls
Her mother's fillet with fringes of pearls;

Quickly she turned with a child's caprice
And pressed on the mirror a swift, glad kiss.

Queen Gulnaar laughed like a tremulous rose:
"Here is my rival, O King Feroz."

THE POET TO DEATH

TARRY a while, O Death, I cannot die
While yet my sweet life burgeons with its spring;
Fair is my youth, and rich the echoing boughs
Where *dhadikulas* sing.

Tarry a while, O Death, I cannot die
With all my blossoming hopes unharvested,
My joys ungarnered, all my songs unsung,
And all my tears unshed.

Tarry a while, till I am satisfied
Of love and grief, of earth and altering sky;
Till all my human hungers are fulfilled,
O Death, I cannot die!

THE INDIAN GIPSY

IN tattered robes that hoard a glittering trace
Of bygone colours, broidered to the knee,
Behold her, daughter of a wandering race,
Tameless, with the bold falcon's agile grace,
And the lithe tiger's sinuous majesty.

With frugal skill her simple wants she tends,
She folds her tawny heifers and her sheep
On lonely meadows when the daylight ends,
Ere the quick night upon her flock descends
Like a black panther from the caves of sleep.

Time's river winds in foaming centuries
Its changing, swift, irrevocable course
To far off and incalculable seas;
She is twin-born with primal mysteries,
And drinks of life at Time's forgotten source.

TO MY CHILDREN

Jaya Surya, ætat 4

GOLDEN sun of victory, born
In my life's unclouded morn,
In my lambent sky of love,
May your growing glory prove
Sacred to your consecration,
To my art and to my nation . . .
Sun of victory, may you be
Sun of song and liberty.

Padmaja, ætat 3

Lotus-maiden, you who claim
All the sweetness of your name,
Lakshmi, fortune's queen, defend you,
Lotus-born like you, and send you
Balmy moons of love to bless you,
Gentle joy-winds to caress you . . .
Lotus-maiden, may you be
Fragrant of all ecstasy.

Ranadheera, ætat 2

Little lord of battle, hail
In your newly-tempered mail!
Learn to conquer, learn to fight
In the foremost flanks of right,
Like Valmiki's heroes bold,
Rubies girt in epic gold . . .
Lord of battle, may you be,
Lord of love and chivalry.

Lilamani, ætat 1

Limpid jewel of delight
Severed from the tender night
Of your sheltering mother-mine,
Leap and sparkle, dance and shine,
Blithely and securely set
In love's magic coronet . . .
Living jewel, may you be
Laughter-bound and sorrow-free.

THE PARDAH NASHIN

HER life is a revolving dream
Of languid and sequestered ease;
Her girdles and her fillets gleam
Like changing fires on sunset seas;
Her raiment is like morning mist,
Shot opal, gold and amethyst.

From thieving light of eyes impure,
From coveting sun or wind's caress,
Her days are guarded and secure
Behind her carven lattices,
Like jewels in a turbaned crest,
Like secrets in a lover's breast.

But though no hand unsanctioned dares
Unveil the mysteries of her grace,
Time lifts the curtain unawares,
And Sorrow looks into her face . . .
Who shall prevent the subtle years,
Or shield a woman's eyes from tears?

TO YOUTH

O YOUTH, sweet comrade Youth, wouldst thou be
gone?

Long have we dwelt together, thou and I;
Together drunk of many an alien dawn,
And plucked the fruit of many an alien sky.

Ah, fickle friend, must I, who yesterday
Dreamed forward to long, undimmed ecstasy,
Henceforward dream, because thou wilt not stay,
Backward to transient pleasure and to thee?

I give thee back thy false, ephemeral vow;
But, O beloved comrade, ere we part,
Upon my mournful eyelids and my brow
Kiss me who hold thine image in my heart.

STREET CRIES

WHEN dawn's first cymbals beat upon the sky,
Rousing the world to labour's various cry,
To tend the flock, to bind the mellowing grain,
From ardent toil to forge a little gain,
And fasting men go forth on hurrying feet,
Buy bread, buy bread, rings down the eager street.

When the earth falters and the waters swoon
With the implacable radiance of noon,
And in dim shelters koels hush their notes,
And the faint, thirsting blood in languid throats
Craves liquid succour from the cruel heat,
Buy fruit, buy fruit, steals down the panting
street.

When twilight twinkling o'er the gay bazaars,
Unfurls a sudden canopy of stars,
When lutes are strung and fragrant torches lit
On white roof-terraces where lovers sit
Drinking together of life's poignant sweet,
Buy flowers, buy flowers, floats down the singing
street.

TO INDIA

O YOUNG through all thy immemorial years!
Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,
And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
Beget new glories from thine ageless womb!

The nations that in fettered darkness weep
Crave thee to lead them where great mornings
break. . . .

Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep?
Arise and answer for thy children's sake!

Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound
To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast;
Waken, O slumbering Mother, and be crowned,
Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.

THE ROYAL TOMBS OF GOLCONDA

I MUSE among these silent fanes
Whose spacious darkness guards your dust;
Around me sleep the hoary plains
That hold your ancient wars in trust.
I pause, my dreaming spirit hears,
Across the wind's unquiet tides,
The glimmering music of your spears,
The laughter of your royal brides.

In vain, O Kings, doth time aspire
To make your names oblivion's sport,
While yonder hill wears like a tiar
The ruined grandeur of your fort.
Though centuries falter and decline,
Your proven strongholds shall remain
Embodied memories of your line,
Incarnate legends of your reign.

O Queens, in vain old Fate decreed
Your flower-like bodies to the tomb;
Death is in truth the vital seed
Of your imperishable bloom.

Each new-born year the bulbuls sing
Their songs of your renascent loves;
Your beauty wakens with the spring
To kindle these pomegranate groves.

TO A BUDDHA SEATED ON A LOTUS

LORD BUDDHA, on thy Lotus-throne,
With praying eyes and hands elate,
What mystic rapture dost thou own,
Immutable and ultimate?
What peace, unravished of our ken,
Annihilate from the world of men?

The wind of change for ever blows
Across the tumult of our way,
To-morrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday.
Dream yields to dream, strife follows strife,
And Death unweaves the webs of Life.

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred, the fruit denied;
But not the peace, supremely won,
Lord Buddha, of thy Lotus-throne,

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,

Diviner summits to attain,
With faith that sinks and feet that tire;
But nought shall conquer or control
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

The end, elusive and afar,
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,
And all our mortal moments are
A session of the Infinite.
How shall we reach the great, unknown
Nirvana of thy Lotus-throne?

THE BIRD OF TIME
SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH

THE BIRD OF TIME

☉ BIRD of Time on your fruitful bough
What are the songs you sing? . . .
Songs of the glory and gladness of life,
Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,
And the lilting joy of the spring;
Of hope that sows for the years unborn,
And faith that dreams of a tarrying morn,
The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath,
And the mystic silence that men call death.

O Bird of Time, say where did you learn
The changing measures you sing? . . .
In blowing forests and breaking tides,
In the happy laughter of new-made brides,
And the nests of the new-born spring;
In the dawn that thrills to a mother's prayer,
And the night that shelters a heart's despair,
In the sigh of pity, the sob of hate,
And the pride of a soul that has conquered fate.

DIRGE

(In sorrow of her bereavement)

WHAT longer need hath she of loveliness
Whom Death has parted from her lord's caress?
Of glimmering robes like rainbow-tangled mist,
Of gleaming glass or jewels on her wrist,
Blossoms or fillet-pearls to deck her head,
Or jasmine garlands to adorn her bed?

Put by the mirror of her bridal days. . . .
Why needs she now its counsel or its praise,
Or happy symbol of the henna leaf
For hands that know the comradeship of grief,
Red spices for her lips that drink of sighs,
Or black collyrium for her weeping eyes?

Shatter her shining bracelets, break the string
Threading the mystic marriage-beads that cling
Loth to desert a sobbing throat so sweet,
Unbind the golden anklets on her feet,
Divest her of her azure veils and cloud
Her living beauty in a living shroud.

.

Nay, let her be! . . . what comfort can we give
For joy so frail, for hope so fugitive?
The yearning pain of unfulfilled delight,
The moonless vigils of her lonely night,
For the abysmal anguish of her tears,
And flowering springs that mock her empty years?

AN INDIAN LOVE SONG

(Written to an Indian tune)

He

LIFT up the veils that darken the delicate moon of
thy glory and grace,
Withhold not, O Love, from the night of my long-
ing the joy of thy luminous face,
Give me a spear of the scented *keora* guarding thy
pinioned curls,
Or a silken thread from the fringes that trouble
the dream of thy glimmering pearls;
Faint grows my soul with thy tresses' perfume and
the song of thy anklets' caprice,
Revive me, I pray, with the magical nectar that
dwells in the flower of thy kiss.

She

How shall I yield to the voice of thy pleading, how
shall I grant thy prayer,
Or give thee a rose-red silken tassel, a scented leaf
from my hair?

Or fling in the flame of thy heart's desire the veils
that cover my face,
Profane the law of my father's creed for a foe of
my father's race?
Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and
slaughtered our sacred kine,
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles
sever thy people and mine.

He

What are the sins of my race, Beloved, what are my
people to thee?
And what are thy shrine, and kine and kindred,
what are thy gods to me?
Love recks not of feuds and bitter follies, of
stranger, comrade or kin,
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells and the cry
of the *muezzin*.
For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong and con-
quer the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow that
sullied a bygone age.

IN REMEMBRANCE

(*Violet Clarke—died March 21, 1909*)

WITH eager knowledge of our ancient lore,
And prescient love of all our ancient race,
You came to us, with gentle hands that bore
Bright gifts of genius, youth, and subtle grace.

Our shrines, our sacred streams, our sumptuous art,
Old hills that scale the sky's unageing dome,
Recalled some long-lost rapture to your heart,
Some far-off memory of your spirit's home.

.

We said: "She comes, an exquisite, strange flower
From the rich gardens of a northern king" . . .
But lo! our souls perceived you in that hour
The very rose whereof our poets sing.

Who sped your beauty's seed across the sea,
Bidding you burgeon in that alien clime?
And what prophetic wind of destiny
Restored you to us in your flowering time

For a brief season to delight and bless
Our hearts with delicate splendour and perfume,
Till Death usurped your vivid loveliness
In wanton envy of its radiant bloom?

O frail, miraculous flower, tho' you are dead,
The deathless fragrance of your spirit cleaves
To the dear wreath whereon our tears are shed,
Of your sweet wind-blown and love-garnered
Leaves.¹

¹ "*Leaves*" is the title of her book of stories, published after her death.

LOVE AND DEATH

I DREAMED my love had set thy spirit free,
Enfranchised thee from Fate's o'ermastering power,
And girt thy being with a scatheless dower
Of rich and joyous immortality;
Of Love, I dreamed my soul had ransomed thee,
In thy lone, dread, incalculable hour
From those pale hands at which all mortals cower,
And conquered Death by Love, like Savitri.
When I awoke, alas, my love was vain
E'en to annul one throe of destined pain,
Or by one heart-beat to prolong thy breath;
O Love, alas, that love could not assuage
The burden of thy human heritage,
Or save thee from the swift decrees of Death.

THE DANCE OF LOVE

(Written for Madame Liza Lehmann)

THE music sighs and slumbers,
It stirs and sleeps again . . .
Hush, it wakes and weeps and murmurs
Like a woman's heart in pain;
Now it laughs and calls and coaxes,
Like a lover in the night,
Now it pants with sudden longing,
Now it sobs with spent delight.

Like bright and wind-blown lilies,
The dancers sway and shine,
Swift in a rhythmic circle,
Soft in a rhythmic line;
Their lithe limbs gleam like amber
Thro' their veils of golden gauze,
As they glide and bend and beckon,
As they wheel and wind and pause.

The voices of lutes and cymbals
Fail on the failing breeze,
And the midnight's soul grows weary
With the scent of the champak trees;

But the subtle feet of the dancers
In a long, returning chain,
Wake in the heart of lovers
Love's ecstasy and pain.

A LOVE SONG FROM THE NORTH

TELL me no more of thy love, *papeeha*,¹
Wouldst thou recall to my heart, *papeeha*,
Dreams of delight that are gone,
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?
I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,
And jewelled with raindrops the mango-leaves
 quiver,
And tender boughs flower on the plain. . . .
But what is their beauty to me, *papeeha*,
Beauty of blossom and shower, *papeeha*,
That brings not my lover again?

Tell me no more of thy love, *papeeha*,
Wouldst thou revive in my heart, *papeeha*,
Grief for the joy that is gone?
I hear the bright peacock in glimmering wood-
 lands
Cry to its mate in the dawn;
I hear the black *koel*'s slow, tremulous wooing,
And sweet in the gardens the calling and cooing

¹ The *papeeha* is a bird that comes in Northern India when the mangoes are ripe, and calls "Pi-kaban, Pi-kaban?"—Where is my love?

Of passionate bulbul and dove. . . .
But what is their music to me, *papeeha*
Songs of their laughter and love, *papeeha*,
To me, forsaken of love?

AT TWILIGHT

(On the way to Golconda)

WEARY, I sought kind Death among the rills
That drink of purple twilight where the plain
Broods in the shadow of untroubled hills:
I cried, "High dreams and hope and love are vain,
Absolve my spirit of its poignant ills,
And cleanse me from the bondage of my pain!

"Shall hope prevail where clamorous hate is rife,
Shall sweet love prosper or high dreams find place
Amid the tumult of reverberant strife
'Twixt ancient creeds, 'twixt race and ancient race,
That mars the grave, glad purposes of life,
Leaving no refuge save thy succouring face?"

.
E'en as I spake, a mournful wind drew near,
Heavy with scent of drooping roses shed,
And incense scattered from the passing bier
Of some loved woman canopied in red,
Borne with slow chant and swift-remembering
tear,
To the blind, ultimate silence of the dead. . . .

O lost, O quenched in unawakening sleep
The glory of her dear, reluctant eyes!
O hushed the eager feet that knew the steep
And intricate ways of ecstasy and sighs!
And dumb with alien slumber, dim and deep,
The living heart that was love's paradise!

.

Quick with the sense of joys she hath foregone,
Returned my soul to beckoning joys that wait,
Laughter of children and the lyric dawn,
And love's delight, profound and passionate,
Winged dreams that blow their golden clarion,
And hope that conquers immemorial hate.

ALONE

ALONE, O Love, I seek the blossoming glades,
The bright, accustomed alleys of delight,
Pomegranate-gardens of the mellowing dawn,
Serene and sumptuous orchards of the night.

Alone, O Love, I breast the shimmering waves,
The changing tides of life's familiar streams,
Wide seas of hope, swift rivers of desire,
The moon-enchanted estuary of dreams.

But no compassionate wind or comforting star
Brings me sweet word of thine abiding place . . .
In what predestined hour of joy or tears
Shall I attain the sanctuary of thy face?

A RAJPUT LOVE SONG

(PARVATI *at her lattice*)

O LOVE! were you a basil-wreath to twine among
my tresses,

A jewelled clasp of shining gold to bind around my
sleeve,

O Love! were you the *keora's* soul that haunts my
silken raiment,

A bright, vermilion tassel in the girdles that I
weave;

O Love! were you the scented fan that lies upon
my pillow,

A sandal lute, or silver lamp that burns before my
shrine,

Why should I fear the jealous dawn that spreads
with cruel laughter,

Sad veils of separation between your face and
mine?

*Haste, O wild-bee hours, to the gardens of the sun-
set!*

Fly, wild-parrot day, to the orchards of the west!

*Come, O tender night, with your sweet, consoling
darkness,
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my
breast!*

(AMAR SINGH *in the saddle*)

O Love! were you the hooded hawk upon my hand
that flutters,
Its collar-band of gleaming bells atinkle as I ride,
O Love! were you a turban-spray or floating heron-
feather,
The radiant, swift, unconquered sword that swing-
eth at my side;

O Love! were you a shield against the arrows of my
foemen,
An amulet of jade against the perils of the way,
How should the drum-beats of the dawn divide me
from your bosom,
Or the union of the midnight be ended with the
day?

*Haste, O wild-deer hours, to the meadows of the
sunset!
Fly, wild stallion day, to the pastures of the west!
Come, O tranquil night, with your soft, consenting
darkness,
And bear me to the fragrance of my Beloved's
breast!*

A PERSIAN LOVE SONG

O LOVE! I know not why, when you are glad,
Gaily my glad heart leaps.
O Love! I know not why, when you are sad,
Wildly my sad heart weeps.

I know not why, if sweet be your repose,
My waking heart finds rest,
Or if your eyes be dim with pain, sharp throes
Of anguish rend my breast.

Hourly this subtle mystery flowers anew,
O Love, I know not why . . .
Unless it be, perchance, that I am you,
Dear love, that you are I!

TO LOVE

O LOVE! of all the riches that are mine,
What gift have I withheld before thy shrine?

What tender ecstasy of prayer and praise
Or lyric flower of my impassioned days?

What poignant dream have I denied to thee
Of secret hope, desire and memory;

Or intimate anguish of sad years, long dead,
Old griefs unstaunched, old fears uncomforted;

What radiant prophecies that thrill and throng
The unborn years with swift delight of song?

O Love! of all the treasures that I own,
What gift have I withheld before thy throne?

SONGS OF THE SPRINGTIME

SPRING

YOUNG leaves grow green on the banyan twigs,
And red on the peepul tree,
The honey-birds pipe to the budding figs,
And honey-blooms call the bee.

Poppies squander their fragile gold
In the silvery aloe-brake,
Coral and ivory lilies unfold
Their delicate lives on the lake.

Kingfishers ruffle the feathery sedge,
And all the vivid air thrills
With butterfly-wings in the wild-rose hedge,
And the luminous blue of the hills.

Kamala tinkles a lingering foot
In the grove where temple-bells ring,
And Krishna plays on his bamboo flute
An idyl of love and spring.

A SONG IN SPRING

WILD bees that rifle the mango blossom,
Set free awhile from the love-god's string,
Wild birds that sway in the citron branches,
Drunk with the rich, red honey of spring,

Fireflies weaving aërial dances
In fragile rhythms of flickering gold,
What do you know in your blithe, brief season
Of dreams deferred and a heart grown old?

But the wise winds know, as they pause to slacken
The speed of their subtle, omniscient flight,
Divining the magic of unblown lilies,
Foretelling the stars of the unborn night.

They have followed the hurrying feet of pilgrims,
Tracking swift prayers to their utmost goals,
They have spied on Love's old and changeless secret,
And the changing sorrow of human souls.

They have tarried with Death in her parleying-
places,
And issued the word of her high decree,
Their wings have winnowed the garnered sunlight,
Their lips have tasted the purple sea.

THE JOY OF THE SPRINGTIME

SPRINGTIME, O Springtime, what is your essence,
The lilt of a bulbul, the laugh of a rose,
The dance of the dew on the wings of a moonbeam,
The voice of the zephyr that sings as he goes,
The hope of a bride or the dream of a maiden
Watching the petals of gladness uncloze?

Springtime, O Springtime, what is your secret,
The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,
That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder
And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,
That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom
The roots of delight in the heart of the earth?

VASANT PANCHAMI ¹

(Lilavati's Lament at the Feast of Spring)

Go, dragon-fly, fold up your purple wing,
Why will you bring me tidings of the spring?
O lilting *koels*, hush your rapturous notes,
O *dbadikulas*, still your passionate throats,
Or seek some further garden for your nest . . .
Your songs are poisoned arrows in my breast.

O quench your flame, ye crimson *gulumohors*,
That flaunt your dazzling bloom across my doors,
Furl your white bells, sweet *champa* buds that call
Wild bees to your ambrosial festival,
And hold your breath, O dear *sirisha* trees . . .
You slay my heart with bitter memories.

O joyous girls who rise at break of morn
With sandal-soil your thresholds to adorn,

¹ *The Vasant Panchami is the spring festival when Hindu girls and married women carry gifts of lighted lamps and new-grown corn as offerings to the goddess of the spring and set them afloat on the face of the waters. Hindu widows cannot take part in any festive ceremonials. Their portion is sorrow and austerity.*

Ye brides who streamward bear on jewelled feet
Your gifts of silver lamps and new-blown wheat,
I pray you dim your voices when you sing
Your radiant salutations to the spring.

Hai! what have I to do with nesting birds,
With lotus-honey, corn and ivory curds,
With plantain blossom and pomegranate fruit,
Or rose-wreathed lintels and rose-scented lute,
With lighted shrines and fragrant altar fires
Where happy women breathe their hearts' desires?

For my sad life is doomed to be, alas,
Ruined and sere like sorrow-trodden grass,
My heart hath grown, plucked by the wind of
grief,
Akin to fallen flower and faded leaf,
Akin to every lone and withered thing
That hath foregone the kisses of the spring.

IN A TIME OF FLOWERS

O LOVE! do you know the spring is here
With the lure of her magic flute? . . .
The old earth breaks into passionate bloom
At the kiss of her fleet, gay foot.
The burgeoning leaves on the almond boughs,
And the leaves on the blue wave's breast
Are crowned with the limpid and delicate light
Of the gems in your turban-crest.
The bright pomegranate buds unfold,
The frail wild lilies appear,
Like the blood-red jewels you used to fling
O'er the maidens that danced at the feast of spring
To welcome the new-born year.

O Love! do you know the spring is here? . . .
The dawn and the dusk grow rife
With scent and song and tremulous mirth,
The blind, rich travail of life.
The winds are drunk with the odorous breath
Of *henna*, *sarisha*, and *neem* . . .
Do they ruffle your cold, strange, tranquil sleep,
Or trouble your changeless dream
With poignant thoughts of the world you loved,

And the beauty you held so dear?
Do you long for a brief, glad hour to wake
From your lonely slumber for sweet love's sake,
To welcome the new-born year?

IN PRAISE OF GULMOHUR BLOSSOMS

WHAT can rival your lovely hue
O gorgeous boon of the spring?
The glimmering red of a bridal robe,
Rich red of a wild bird's wing?
Or the mystic blaze of the gem that burns
On the brow of a serpent-king?

What can rival the valiant joy
Of your dazzling, fugitive sheen?
The limpid clouds of the lustrous dawn
That colour the ocean's mien?
Or the blood that poured from a thousand breasts
To succour a Rajput queen? ¹

What can rival the radiant pride
Of your frail, victorious fire?
The flame of hope or the flame of hate,
Quick flame of my heart's desire?
Or the rapturous light that leaps to heaven
From a true wife's funeral pyre?

¹ *Queen Padmini of Chitore, famous in Indian history and song.*

NASTURTIIUMS

POIGNANT and subtle and bitter perfume
Exquisite, luminous, passionate bloom,
Your leaves interwoven of fragrance and fire
Are Savitri's sorrow and Sita's desire,
Draupadi's longing, Damayanti's fears,
And sweetest Sakuntala's magical tears.¹

¹ *These are the immortal women of Sanscrit legend and song, whose poignant sorrows and radiant virtues still break the heart and inspire the lives of Indian women.*

GOLDEN CASSIA

O BRILLIANT blossoms that strew my way,
You are only woodland flowers they say.

But, I sometimes think that perchance you are
Fragments of some new-fallen star;

Or golden lamps for a fairy shrine,
Or golden pitchers for fairy wine.

Perchance you are, O frail and sweet!
Bright anklet-bells from the wild spring's feet,

Or the gleaming tears that some fair bride shed
Remembering her lost maidenhead.

But now, in the memoried dusk you seem
The glimmering ghosts of a bygone dream.

CHAMPAK BLOSSOMS

AMBER petals, ivory petals,
Petals of carven jade,
Charming with your ambrosial sweetness
Forest and field and glade,
Foredoomed in your hour of transient glory
To shrivel and shrink and fade!

Tho' mango blossoms have long since vanished,
And orange blossoms be shed,
They live anew in the luscious harvests
Of ripening yellow and red;
But you, when your delicate bloom is over,
Will reckon amongst the dead.

Only to girdle a girl's dark tresses
Your fragrant hearts are uncurled:
Only to garland the vernal breezes
Your fragile stars are unfurled.
You make no boast in your purposeless beauty
To serve or profit the world.

Yet, 'tis of you thro' the moolit ages
That maidens and minstrels sing,

And lay your buds on the great god's altar,
O radiant blossoms that fling
Your rich, voluptuous, magical perfume
To ravish the winds of spring.

ECSTASY

HEART, O my heart! lo, the springtime is waking
In meadow and grove.

Lo, the mellifluous *koels* are making
Their pæans of love.

Behold the bright rivers and rills in their glancing,
Melodious flight,

Behold how the sumptuous peacocks are dancing
In rhythmic delight.

Shall we in the midst of life's exquisite chorus
Remember our grief,

O heart, when the rapturous season is o'er us
Of blossom and leaf?

Their joy from the birds and the streams let us
borrow,

O heart! let us sing,
The years are before us for weeping and sorrow . . .
To-day it is spring!

INDIAN FOLK-SONGS

To Indian Tunes

VILLAGE SONG

FULL are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long,
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling,
Is it the wild owl's cry?
There are no tender moonbeams to light me,
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Rām re Rām! I shall die.

My brother will murmur "Why doth she linger?"
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, "O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep." . . .
The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like black birds in the sky. . . .
O! if the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?
Unless Thou succour my footsteps and guide me,
Rām re Rām! I shall die.

SLUMBER SONG FOR SUNALINI

(In a Bengalee metre)

WHERE the golden, glowing
Champak-buds are blowing,
By the swiftly-flowing streams,
Now, when day is dying,
There are fairies flying
Scattering a cloud of dreams.

Slumber-spirits winging
Thro' the forest singing,
Flutter hither bringing soon,
Baby-visions sheeny
For my Sunalini . . .
Hush thee, O my pretty moon!

Sweet, the saints shall bless thee . . .
Hush, mine arms caress thee,
Hush, my heart doth press thee, sleep,
Till the red dawn dances
Breaking thy soft trances,
Sleep, my Sunalini, sleep!

SONGS OF MY CITY

I. IN A LATTICED BALCONY

How shall I feed thee, Beloved?
On golden-red honey and fruit.
How shall I please thee, Beloved?
With th' voice of the cymbal and lute.

How shall I garland thy tresses?
With pearls from the jessamine close.
How shall I perfume thy fingers?
With th' soul of the keora and rose.

How shall I deck thee, O Dearest?
In hues of the peacock and dove.
How shall I woo thee, O Dearest?
With the delicate silence of love.

II. IN THE BAZAARS OF HYDERABAD

(To a tune of the Bazaars)

WHAT do you sell, O ye merchants?
Richly your wares are displayed.
*Turbans of crimson and silver,
Tunics of purple brocade,
Mirrors with panels of amber,
Daggers with handles of jade.*

What do you weigh, O ye vendors?
Saffron and lentil and rice.
What do you grind, O ye maidens?
Sandalwood, henna, and spice.
What do you call, O ye pedlars?
Chessmen and ivory dice.

What do you make, O ye goldsmiths?
*Wristlet and anklet and ring,
Bells for the feet of blue pigeons,
Frail as a dragon-fly's wing,
Girdles of gold for the dancers,
Scabbards of gold for the king.*

What do you cry, O ye fruitmen?
Citron, pomegranate, and plum.
What do you play, O musicians?
Cithār, sarangi, and drum.
What do you chant, O magicians?
Spells for the æons to come.

What do you weave, O ye flower-girls
With tassels of azure and red?
Crowns for the brow of a bridegroom,
Chaplets to garland his bed,
Sheets of white blossoms new-gathered
To perfume the sleep of the dead.

BANGLE-SELLERS

BANGLE-SELLERS are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair. . . .
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain-mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream;
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves
To the limpid glory of new-born leaves.

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Some are purple and gold-flecked grey,
For her who has journeyed through life midway,

Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
Who serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

THE FESTIVAL OF SERPENTS

SHINING ones awake, we seek your chosen temples
In caves and sheltering sandhills and sacred banyan
roots;

O lift your dreaming heads from their trance of
ageless wisdom,

And weave your mystic measures to the melody of
flutes.

We bring you milk and maize, wild figs and golden
honey,

And kindle fragrant incense to hallow all the air,
With fasting lips we pray, with fervent hearts we
praise you,

O bless our lowly offerings and hearken to our
prayer.

Guard our helpless lives and guide our patient
labours,

And cherish our dear vision like the jewels in your
crests;

O spread your hooded watch for the safety of our
slumbers,

And soothe the troubled longings that clamour in
our breasts.

Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,
Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun;
Seers are ye and symbols of the ancient silence,
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are
one.

SONG OF RADHA THE MILKMAID

I CARRIED my curds to the Mathura¹ fair. . . .
How softly the heifers were lowing. . . .
I wanted to cry "Who will buy, who will buy
These curds that are white as the clouds in the sky
When the breezes of *Shrawan* are blowing?"
But my heart was so full of your beauty, Beloved,
They laughed as I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda! . . .

How softly the river was flowing!

I carried my pots to the Mathura tide. . . .
How gaily the rowers were rowing! . . .
My comrades called "Ho! let us dance, let us sing
And wear saffron garments to welcome the spring,
And pluck the new buds that are blowing."
But my heart was so full of your music, Beloved,
They mocked when I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda! . . .

How gaily the river was flowing!

¹ *Mathura is the chief centre of the mystic worship of Khrishna, the Divine Cowherd and Musician—the "Divine Beloved" of every Hindu heart. He is also called Govinda.*

I carried my gifts to the Mathura shrine. . . .
How brightly the torches were glowing! . . .
I folded my hands at the altars to pray
“O shining ones guard us by night and by day”—
And loudly the conch shells were blowing.
But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,
They were wroth when I cried without knowing:
 Govinda! Govinda!
 Govinda! Govinda! . . .
How brightly the river was flowing!

SPINNING SONG

PAMDINI:

My sisters plucked green leaves at morn
To deck the garden swing,
And donned their shining golden veils
For the Festival of Spring. . . .
But sweeter than the new-blown vines,
And the call of nesting birds
Are the tendrils of your hair, Beloved,
And the music of your words.

MAYURA:

My sisters sat beside the hearth
Kneading the saffron cakes,
They gathered honey from the hives
For the Festival of Snakes. . . .
Why should I wake the jewelled lords
With offerings or vows,
Who wear the glory of your love
Like a jewel on my brows?

SARASVATI:

My sisters sang at evenfall
A hymn of ancient rites,

And kindled rows of silver lamps
For the Festival of Lights. . . .
But I leaned against the lattice-door
To watch the kindling skies,
And praised the gracious gods, Beloved,
For the beauty of your eyes.

*The Festivals are known respectively as the Vasant Panchami, Nag-
panchami, and Depavali.*

HYMN TO INDRA, LORD OF RAIN

Men's Voices

O THOU, who rousest the voice of the thunder,
And biddest the storms to awake from their sleep,
Who breakest the strength of the mountains asunder,
And cleavest the manifold pride of the deep!
Thou, who with bountiful torrent and river
Dost nourish the heart of the forest and plain,
Withhold not Thy gifts O Omnipotent Giver!
Hearken, O Lord of Rain!

Women's Voices

O Thou, who wieldest Thy deathless dominion
O'er mutable legions of earth and the sky,
Who grantest the eagle the joy of her pinion,
And teachest the young of the *koel* to fly!
Thou who art mighty to succour and cherish,
Who savest from sorrow and shieldest from pain,
Withhold not Thy merciful love, or we perish,
Hearken, O Lord of Rain!

SONGS OF LIFE

THE FAERY ISLE OF JANJIRA

(To Her Highness Nazli Raffia, Begum of Janjira)

FAIN would I dwell in your faery kingdom,
O faery queen of a flowering clime,
Where life glides by to a delicate measure,
With the glamour and grace of a far-off time.

Fain would I dwell where your wild doves wander,
Your palm-woods burgeon and sea-winds sing. . . .
Lulled by the rune of the rhythmic waters,
In your Island of Bliss it is always spring.

Yet must I go where the loud world beckons,
And the urgent drum-beat of destiny calls,
Far from your white dome's luminous slumber,
Far from the dream of your fortress walls,

Into the strife of the throng and the tumult,
The war of sweet Love against folly and wrong;
Where brave hearts carry the sword of battle,
'Tis mine to carry the banner of song,

The solace of faith to the lips that falter,
The succour of hope to the hands that fail,
The tidings of joy when Peace shall triumph,
When Truth shall conquer and Love prevail.

THE SOUL'S PRAYER

IN childhood's pride I said to Thee:
"O Thou, who mad'st me of Thy breath,
Speak, Master, and reveal to me
Thine inmost laws of life and death.

"Give me to drink each joy and pain
Which Thine eternal hand can mete,
For my insatiate soul would drain
Earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet.

"Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate lore of love and life
And mystic knowledge of the grave."

Lord, Thou didst answer stern and low:
"Child, I will hearken to thy prayer,
And thy unconquered soul shall know
All passionate rapture and despair.

"Thou shalt drink deep of joy and fame,
And love shall burn thee like a fire,
And pain shall cleanse thee like a flame,
To purge the dross from thy desire.

“So shall thy chastened spirit yearn
To seek from its blind prayer release,
And spent and pardoned, sue to learn
The simple secret of My peace.

“I, bending from my sevenfold height
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My light,
And Death the shadow of My face.”

TRANSCIENCE

NAY, do not grieve tho' life be full of sadness,
Dawn will not veil her splendour for your grief,
Nor spring deny their bright, appointed beauty
To lotus blossom and ashoka leaf.

Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;
To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,
Will soon be some forgotten yesterday.

Nay, do not weep; new hopes, new dreams, new
 faces,
The unspent joy of all the unborn years,
Will prove your heart a traitor to its sorrow,
And make your eyes unfaithful to their tears.

THE OLD WOMAN

A LONELY old woman sits out in the street
'Neath the boughs of a banyan tree,
And hears the bright echo of hurrying feet,
The pageant of life going blithely and fleet
 To the feast of eternity.

Her tremulous hand holds a battered white bowl,
If perchance in your pity you fling her a dole;
She is poor, she is bent, she is blind,
But she lifts a brave heart to the jest of the days,
And her withered, brave voice croons its pæan of
 praise,

Be the gay world kind or unkind:

*"La ilaha illa-l-Allah,
 La ilaha illa-l-Allah,
 Muhammad-ar-Rasul-Allah."*

In hope of your succour, how often in vain,
So patient she sits at my gates,
In the face of the sun and the wind and the rain,
Holding converse with poverty, hunger and pain,
And the ultimate sleep that awaits. . . .
In her youth she hath comforted lover and son,

In her weary old age, O dear God, is there none
To bless her tired eyelids to rest? . . .
Tho' the world may not tarry to help her or heed,
More clear than the cry of her sorrow and need
Is the faith that doth solace her breast:

*"La ilaha illa-l-Allah,
La ilaha illa-l-Allah,
Muhammad-ar-Rasul-Allah."*

IN THE NIGHT

SLEEP, O my little ones, sleep,
Safe till the daylight be breaking . . .
We have long vigils to keep,
Harvests to sow while you sleep,
Fair for the hour of your waking,
Ripe for your sickles to reap.

Sleep, O my little ones, sleep,
Yours is the golden To-morrow,
Yours are the hands that will reap
Dreams that we sow while you sleep,
Fed with our hope and our sorrow,
Rich with the tears that we weep.

AT DAWN

CHILDREN, my children, the daylight is breaking,
The cymbals of morn sound the hour of your
waking,
The long night is o'er, and our labour is ended,
Fair blow the fields that we tilled and we tended,
Swiftly the harvest grows mellow for reaping,
The harvest we sowed in the time of your sleeping.

Weak were our hands but our service was tender,
In darkness we dreamed of the dawn of your
splendour,
In silence we strove for the joy of the morrow,
And watered your seeds from the wells of our
sorrow,
We toiled to enrich the glad hour of your waking,
Our vigil is done, lo! the daylight is breaking.

Children, my children, who wake to inherit
The ultimate hope of our travailing spirit,
Say, when your young hearts shall take to their
keeping

The manifold dreams we have sown for your reaping,

Is it praise, is it pain you will grant us for guerdon?

Anoint with your love or arraign with your pardon?

AN ANTHEM OF LOVE

Two hands are we to serve thee, O our Mother,
To strive and succour, cherish and unite;
Two feet are we to cleave the waning darkness,
And gain the pathways of the dawning light.

Two ears are we to catch the nearing echo,
The sounding cheer of Time's prophetic horn;
Two eyes are we to reap the crescent glory,
The radiant promise of nascent morn.

One heart are we to love thee, O our Mother,
One undivided, indivisible soul,
Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion
Towards a great, divinely-destined goal.

SOLITUDE

LET us rise, O my heart, let us go where the twilight
is calling
Far away from the sound of this lonely and menacing crowd,
To the glens, to the glades, where the magical darkness is falling
In rivers of gold from the breast of a radiant cloud.

Come away, come away from this throng and its tumult of sorrow,
There is rest, there is peace from the pang of its manifold strife
Where the halcyon night holds in trust the dear songs of the morrow,
And the silence is but a rich pause in the music of life.

Let us climb where the eagles keep guard on the rocky grey ledges,
Let us lie 'neath the palms where perchance we may listen, and reach
A delicate dream from the lips of the slumbering sedges,

That catch from the stars some high tone of their
mystical speech.

Or perchance, we may glean a far glimpse of the
Infinite Bosom

In whose glorious shadow all life is unfolded or
furled,

Thro' the luminous hours ere the lotus of dawn shall
reblossom

In petals of splendour to worship the Lord of the
world.

A CHALLENGE TO FATE

WHY will you vex me with your futile conflict,
Why will you strive with me, O foolish Fate?
You cannot break me with your poignant envy,
You cannot slay me with your subtle hate:
For all the cruel folly you pursue
I will not cry with suppliant hands to you.

You may perchance wreck in your bitter malice
The radiant empire of mine eager eyes . . .
Say, can you rob my memory's dear dominion
O'er sunlit mountains and sidereal skies?
In my enduring treasures I hold
Their ageless splendour of unravished gold.

You may usurp the kingdoms of my hearing . . .
Say, shall my scatheless spirit cease to hear
The bridal rapture of the blowing valleys,
The lyric pageant of the passing year,
The sounding odes and surging harmonies
Of battling tempests and unconquered seas?

Yea, you may smite my mouth to throbbing silence,
Pluck from my lips power of articulate words . . .

Say, shall my heart lack its familiar language
While earth has nests for her mellifluous birds?
Shall my impassioned heart forget to sing
With the ten thousand voices of the spring?

Yea, you may quell my blood with sudden anguish,
Fetter my limbs with some compelling pain . . .
How will you daunt my free, far-journeying fancy
That rides upon the pinions of the rain?
How will you tether my triumphant mind,
Rival and fearless comrade of the wind?

.

Tho' you deny the hope of all my being,
Betray my love, my sweetest dream destroy,
Yet will I slake my individual sorrow
At the deep source of universal joy. . . .
O Fate, in vain you hanker to control
My frail, serene, indomitable soul.

THE CALL TO EVENING PRAYER

Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!

From mosque and minar the *muezzins* are calling;
Pour forth your praises, O Chosen of Islam;
Swiftly the shadows of sunset are falling:
Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!

Ave Maria! Ave Maria!

Devoutly the priests at the altars are singing,
O ye who worship the Son of the Virgin,
Kneel soft at your prayers for the vespers are
 ringing:
Ave Maria! Ave Maria!

Abura Mazda! Abura Mazda!

How the sonorous Avesta is flowing!
Ye, who to Flame and the Light make obeisance,
Bend low where the quenchless blue torches are
 glowing:
Abura Mazda! Abura Mazda!

Naray'yana! Naray'yana!

Hark to the ageless, divine invocation!
Lift up your hands, O ye children of Brahma,
Lift up your voices in rapt adoration:
Naray'yana! Naray'yana!

IN SALUTATION TO THE ETERNAL PEACE

MEN say the world is full of fear and hate,
And all life's ripening harvest-fields await
The restless sickle of relentless fate.

But I, sweet Soul, rejoice that I was born,
When from the climbing terraces of corn
I watch the golden orioles of Thy morn.

What care I for the world's desire and pride,
Who know the silver wings that gleam and glide,
The homing pigeons of Thine eventide?

What care I for the world's loud weariness,
Who dream in twilight granaries Thou dost bless
With delicate sheaves of mellow silences?

Say, shall I heed dull presages of doom,
Or dread the rumoured loneliness and gloom,
The mute and mythic terror of the tomb?

For my glad heart is drunk and drenched with Thee,
O inmost wine of living ecstasy!
O intimate essence of eternity!

MEDLEY

(A Kashmeri Song)

THE poppy grows on the roof-top;
The iris flowers on the grave;
Hope in the heart of a lover,
And fear in the heart of a slave.

The opal lies in the river,
The pearl in the ocean's breast;
Doubt in a grieving bosom,
And faith in a heart at rest.

Fireflies dance in the moon-light,
Peach-leaves dance in the wind;
Dreams and delicate fancies
Dance thro' a poet's mind.

Sweetness dwells in the beehive,
And lives in a maiden's breath;
Joy in the eyes of children
And peace in the hands of Death.

FAREWELL

BRIGHT shower of lambent butterflies,
Soft cloud of murmuring bees,
O fragile storm of sighing leaves
Adrift upon the breeze!

Wild birds with eager wings outspread
To seek an alien sky,
Sweet comrades of a lyric spring.
My little songs, good-bye!

GUERDON

To field and forest
The gifts of the spring,
To hawk and to heron
The pride of their wing;
Her grace to the panther,
Her tints to the dove. . . .
For me, O my Master,
The rapture of Love!

To the hand of the diver
The gems of the tide,
To the eyes of the bridegroom
The face of his bride;
To the heart of a dreamer
The dreams of his youth. . . .
For me, O my Master,
The rapture of Truth!

To priests and to prophets
The joy of their creeds,
To kings and their cohorts
The glory of deeds;

And peace to the vanquished
And hope to the strong. . . .
For me, O my Master,
The rapture of Song!

THE BROKEN WING

SONGS OF LIFE AND DEATH

THE BROKEN WING

"Why should a song-bird like you have a broken wing?"

G. K. GOKHALE

Question

THE great dawn breaks, the mournful night is past,
From her deep age-long sleep she wakes at last!
Sweet and long-slumbering buds of gladness ope
Fresh lips to the returning winds of hope,
Our eager hearts renew their radiant flight
Towards the glory of renascent light,
Life and our land await their destined spring . . .
Song-bird why dost *thou* bear a broken wing?

Answer

Shall spring that wakes mine ancient land again
Call to my wild and suffering heart in vain?
Or Fate's blind arrows still the pulsing note
Of my far-reaching, frail, unconquered throat?
Or a weak bleeding pinion daunt or tire
My flight to the high realms of my desire?
Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring
And scale the stars upon my broken wing!

THE GIFT OF INDIA

Is there aught you need that my hands withhold,
Rich gifts of raiment or grain or gold?
Lo! I have flung to the East and West
Priceless treasures torn from my breast,
And yielded the sons of my stricken womb
To the drum-beats of duty, the sabres of doom.

Gathered like pearls in their alien graves
Silent they sleep by the Persian waves,
Scattered like shells on Egyptian sands,
They lie with pale brows and brave, broken hands,
They are strewn like blossoms mown down by
 chance
On the blood-brown meadows of Flanders and
 France.

Can ye measure the grief of the tears I weep
Or compass the woe of the watch I keep?
Or the pride that thrills thro' my heart's despair
And the hope that comforts the anguish of prayer?
And the far sad glorious vision I see
Of the torn red banners of Victory?

When the terror and tumult of hate shall cease
And life be refashioned on anvils of peace,
And your love shall offer memorial thanks
To the comrades who fought in your dauntless
ranks,
And you honour the deeds of the deathless ones,
Remember the blood of my martyred sons!

August 1915

THE TEMPLE

PRIEST

AWAKE, it is Love's radiant hour of praise!
Bring new-blown leaves his temple to adorn,
Pomegranate-buds and ripe sirisha-sprays,
Wet sheaves of shining corn.

PILGRIM

*O priest! only my broken lute I bring
For Love's praise-offering!*

PRIEST

Behold! the hour of sacrifice draws near.
Pile high the gleaming altar-stones of Love
With delicate burdens of slain woodland deer
And frail white mountain dove.

PILGRIM

*O priest! only my wounded heart I bring
For Love's blood-offering!*

PRIEST

Lo! now it strikes Love's solemn hour of prayer,
Kindle with fragrant boughs his blazing shrine,

Feed the sweet flame with spice and incense rare,
Curds of rose-pastured kine.

PILGRIM

*O priest! only my stricken soul I bring
For Love's burnt-offering!*

LAKSHMI, THE LOTUS-BORN

(Goddess of Fortune)

THOU who didst rise like a pearl from the ocean,
Whose beauty surpasseth the splendour of morn!
Lo! We invoke thee with eager devotion,
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

Come! with sweet eyelids and fingers caressing,
With footfalls auspicious our thresholds adorn,
And grant us the showers and the sheaves of thy
blessing,
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

Prosper our cradles and kindred and cattle,
And cherish our hearth-fires and coffers and corn,
O watch o'er our seasons of peace and of battle,
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

For our dear Land do we offer oblation,
O keep thou her glory unsullied, unshorn,
And guard the invincible hope of our nation,
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

Lakshmi Puja Day, 1915
[150]

THE VICTOR

THEY brought their peacock-lutes of praise
And carven gems in jasper trays,
Rich stores of fragrant musk and myrrh,
And wreaths of scarlet nenuphar . . .
I had no offering that was meet,
And bowed my face upon his feet.

They brought him robes from regal looms,
Inwrought with pearl and silver blooms,
And sumptuous footcloths broiderèd
With beetle-wings and gleaming thread . . .
I had no offering that was meet,
And spread my hands beneath his feet.

They filled his courts with gifts of price,
With tiers of grain and towers of spice,
Tall jars of golden oil and wine,
And herds of camel and of kine . . .
I had no offering that was meet,
And laid my life before his feet.

THE IMAM BARA

(Of Lucknow)

I

OUT of the sombre shadows,
Over the sunlit grass,
Slow in a sad procession
The shadowy pageants pass
Mournful, majestic, and solemn,
Stricken and pale and dumb,
Crowned in their peerless anguish
The sacred martyrs come.
Hark, from the brooding silence
Breaks the wild cry of pain
Wrung from the heart of the ages
Ali! Hassan! Hussain!

II

Come from this tomb of shadows,
Come from this tragic shrine
That throbs with the deathless sorrow
Of a long-dead martyr line.
Love! let the living sunlight

Kindle your splendid eyes
Ablaze with the steadfast triumph
Of the spirit that never dies.
So may the hope of new ages
Comfort the mystic pain
That cries from the ancient silence
*Ali! Hassan! Hussain!*¹

¹*The Imam Bara is a Chapel of Lamentation where Mussulmans of the Shiah Community celebrate the tragic martyrdom of Ali, Hassan, and Hussain during the mourning month of Mobarram. A sort of passion-play takes place to the accompaniment of the refrain, Ali! Hassan! Hussain!*

A SONG FROM SHIRAZ

THE singers of Shiraz are feasting afar
To greet the Nauraz with sarang and cithar. . . .
But what is their music that calleth to me,
From glimmering garden and glowing minar?

*The stars shall be scattered like jewels of glass,
And Beauty be tossed like a shell in the sea,
Ere the lutes of their magical laughter surpass
The lute, of thy tears, O Mohamed Ali!*

From the Mosque-towers of Shiraz ere daylight
begin

My heart is disturbed by the loud muezzin,
But what is the voice of his warning to me,
That waketh the world to atonement of sin?

*The stars shall be broken like mirrors of brass,
And Rapture be sunk like a stone in the sea,
Ere the carpet of prayer or of penance surpass
Thy carpet of dreams, O Mohamed Ali!*



In the silence of Shiraz my soul shall await,
Untroubled, the wandering Angel of Fate. . . .

What terror or joy shall his hands hold for me,
Who bringeth the goblet of guerdon too late?

*The stars shall be mown and uprooted like grass,
And Glory be flung like a weed in the sea,
Ere the goblet of doom or salvation surpass
Thy goblet of love, O Mohamed Ali!*

IMPERIAL DELHI

IMPERIAL City! dowered with sovereign grace
To thy nascent glory still there clings
The splendid tragedy of ancient things,
The regal woes of many a vanquished race;
And memory's tears are cold upon thy face
E'en while thy heart's returning gladness rings
Loud on the sleep of thy forgotten kings,
Who in thine arms sought Life's last resting-place.

Thy changing kings and kingdoms pass away
The gorgeous legends of a bygone day,
But thou dost still immutably remain
Unbroken symbol of proud histories,
Unageing priestess of old mysteries
Before whose shrine the spells of Death are vain.

1912

MEMORIAL VERSES

I. YA MAHBUB! ¹

ARE these the streets that I used to know—
Was it yesterday or æons ago?
Where are the armies that used to wait—
The pilgrims of Love—at your palace gate?
The joyous pæans that thrilled the air
The pageants that shone thro' your palace
square?
And the minstrel music that used to ring
Thro' your magic kingdom . . . when you were
king?

O hands that succoured a people's need
With the splendour of Haroun-al-Rasheed!
O heart that solaced a sad world's cry
With the sumptuous bounty of Hatim Tai!
Where are the days that were winged and clad
In the fabulous glamour of old Baghdad,

¹ "Ya Mahbub," which means O Beloved, was the device on the State banner of the late Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the well-beloved of his people.

And the bird of glory that used to sing
In your magic kingdom . . . when you were king?

.

O king, in your kingdom there is no change.
'Tis only my soul that hath grown so strange,
So faint with sorrow it cannot hear
Aught save the chant at your rose-crowned bier.
My grieving bosom hath grown too cold
To clasp the beauty it treasured of old,
The grace of life and the gifts of spring,
And the dreams I cherished . . . , when you were
king!

August 29, 1911

II. GOKHALE ¹

HEROIC Heart! lost hope of all our days!
Need'st thou the homage of our love or praise?
Lo! let the mournful millions round thy pyre
Kindle their souls with consecrated fire
Caught from the brave torch fallen from thy hand,
To succour and to serve our suffering land,
And in a daily worship taught by thee
Upbuild the temple of her Unity.

February 19, 1915

¹ *Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the great saint and soldier of our national righteousness. His life was a sacrament, and his death was a sacrifice in the cause of Indian unity.*

IN SALUTATION TO MY FATHER'S SPIRIT

(Aghorenath Chattopadhyay)

FAREWELL, farewell, O brave and tender Sage.
O mystic Jester, golden-hearted child!
Selfless, serene, untroubled, unbeguiled
By trivial snares of grief and greed or rage;
O splendid dreamer in a dreamless age
Whose deep alchemic vision reconciled
Time's changing message with the undefiled
Calm wisdom of thy Vedic heritage!

Farewell great spirit, without fear or flaw,
Thy life was love and liberty thy law,
And Truth thy pure imperishable goal . . .
All hail to thee in thy transcendent flight
From hope to hope, from height to heav'nlier
height,
Lost in the rapture of the Cosmic Soul.

January 28, 1915

THE FLUTE-PLAYER OF BRINDABAN ¹

WHY didst thou play thy matchless flute
 Neath the Kadamba tree,
And wound my idly dreaming heart
 With poignant melody,
So where thou goest I must go,
 My flute-player, with thee?

Still must I like a homeless bird
 Wander, forsaking all;
The earthly loves and worldly lures
 That held my life in thrall,
And follow, follow, answering
 Thy magical flute-call.

To Indra's golden-flowering groves
 Where streams immortal flow,
Or to sad Yama's silent Courts
 Engulfed in lampless woe,
Where'er thy subtle flute I hear
 Belovèd I must go!

¹ *Krishna, the Divine Flute-player of Brindaban, who plays the tune of the Infinite that lures every Hindu heart away from mortal cares and attachments.*

No peril of the deep or height
 Shall daunt my wingèd foot;
No fear of time-unconquered space,
 Or light untravelled route,
Impede my heart that pants to drain
 The nectar of thy flute!

FAREWELL

FAREWELL, O eager faces that surround me,
Claiming the tender service of my days,
Farewell, O joyous spirits that have bound me
With the love-sprinkled garlands of your praise!

O golden lamps of hope how shall I bring you
Life's kindling flame from a forsaken fire?
O glowing hearts of youth, how shall I sing you
Life's glorious message from a broken lyre?

To you what further homage shall I render,
Victorious City girdled by the sea,
Where breaks in surging tides of woe and splendour
The age-long tumult of Humanity?

Need you another tribute for a token
Who reft from me the pride of all my years?
Lo! I will leave you with farewell unspoken,
Shrine of dead dreams! O temple of my tears!

THE CHALLENGE

THOU who dost quell in thy victorious tide
Death's ravaged secret and life's ruined pride,
Shall thy great deeps prevail, O conquering Sea,
O'er Love's relentless tides of memory?

Sweet Earth, though in thy lustrous bowl doth shine
The limpid flame of hope's perennial wine,
Thou art too narrow and too frail to bear
The harsh, wild vintage of my heart's despair.

O valiant skies, so eager to uphold
High laughing burdens of sidereal gold,
Swift would your brave brows perish to sustain
The radiant silence of my sleepless pain.

WANDERING BEGGARS

FROM the threshold of the Dawn
On we wander, always on
Till the friendly light be gone
Y' Allab! Y' Allab!

We are free-born sons of Fate,
What care we for wealth or state
Or the glory of the great?
Y' Allab! Y' Allab!

Life may grant us or withhold
Roof or raiment, bread or gold,
But our hearts are gay and bold.
Y' Allab! Y' Allab!

Time is like a wind that blows,
The future is a folded rose,
Who shall pluck it no man knows.
Y' Allab! Y' Allab!

So we go a fearless band,
The staff of freedom in our hand

Wandering from land to land,
Y' *Allab!* Y' *Allab!*

Till we meet the Night that brings
Both to beggars and to kings
The end of all their journeyings
Y' *Allab!* Y' *Allab!*

THE LOTUS

(To M. K. Gandhi)

O MYSTIC Lotus, sacred and sublime,
In myriad-petalled grace inviolate,
Supreme o'er transient storms of tragic Fate,
Deep-rooted in the waters of all Time,
What legions loosed from many a far-off clime
Of wild-bee hordes with lips insatiate,
And hungry winds with wings of hope or hate,
Have thronged and pressed round thy miraculous
 prime
To devastate thy loveliness, to drain
The midmost rapture of thy glorious heart . . .
But who could win thy secret, who attain
Thine ageless beauty born of Brahma's breath,
Or pluck thine immortality, who art
Coeval with the Lords of Life and Death?

THE PRAYER OF ISLAM

WE praise Thee, O Compassionate!
Master of Life and Time and Fate,
Lord of the labouring winds and seas,
Ya Hameed! Ya Hafeez!

Thou art the Radiance of our ways,
Thou art the Pardon of our days,
Whose name is known from star to star,
Ya Ghani! Ya Ghaffar!

Thou art the Goal for which we long,
Thou art our Silence and our Song,
Life of the sunbeam and the seed—
Ya Wahab! Ya Waheed!

Thou dost transmute from hour to hour
Our mortal weakness into power,
Our bondage into liberty,
Ya Quadeer! Ya Quavi!

We are the shadows of Thy light,
We are the secrets of Thy might,

The visions of thy primal dream,
*Ya Rahman! Ya Raheem!*¹

Id-uz-Zoha, 1915

¹ *These are some of the Ninety-nine Beautiful Arabic Names of God
as used by followers of Islam.*

BELLS

Anklet-bells

ANKLET-BELLS! frail anklet-bells!
That hold Love's ancient mystery
As hide the lips of limpid shells
Faint tones of the remembered sea,
You murmur of enchanted rites,
Of sobbing breath and broken speech,
Sweet anguish of rose-scented nights
And wild mouths calling each to each
Or mute with yearning ecstasy.

Cattle-bells

Cattle-bells! soft cattle-bells!
What gracious memories you bring
Of drowsy fields and dreaming wells,
And weary labour's folded wing,
Of frugal mirth round festal fires,
Brief trysts that youth and beauty keep,
Of flowering roofs and fragrant byres
White heifers gathered in for sleep,
Old songs the wandering women sing.

Temple-bells

Temple-bells! deep temple-bells!
Whose urgent voices wreck the sky!
In your importunate music dwells
Man's sad and immemorial cry
That cleaves the dawn with wings of praise,
That cleaves the dark with wings of prayer,
Craves pity for our mortal ways,
Seeks solace for our life's despair,
And peace for suffering hearts that die!

THE GARDEN VIGIL

IN the deep silence of the garden-bowers
Only the stealthy zephyr glides and goes,
Rifling the secret of *sirisha* flowers,
And to the new-born hours
Bequeathes the subtle anguish of the rose.

Pain-weary and dream-worn I lie awake,
Counting like beads the blazing stars o'erhead;
Round me the wind-stirred champak branches
shake

Blossoms that fall and break
In perfumed rain across my lonely bed.

Long ere the sun's first far-off beacons shine,
Or her prophetic clarions call afar,
The gorgeous planets wither and decline,—
Save in its eastern shrine,
Unquenched, unchallenged, the proud morning
star.

O glorious light of hope beyond all reach!
O lovely symbol and sweet sign of him
Whose voice I yearn to hear in tender speech
To comfort me or teach,
Before whose gaze thy golden fires grow dim!

I care not what brave splendours bloom or die
So thou dost burn in thine appointed place,
Supreme in the still dawn-uncoloured sky,
And daily grant that I
May in thy flame adore his hidden face.

INVINCIBLE

O FATE, betwixt the grinding-stones of Pain,
Tho' you have crushed my life like broken grain,
Lo! I will leaven it with my tears and knead
The bread of Hope to comfort and to feed
The myriad hearts for whom no harvests blow
Save bitter herbs of woe.

Tho' in the flame of Sorrow you have thrust
My flowering soul and trod it into dust,
Behold, it doth reblossom like a grove
To shelter under quickening boughs of Love
The myriad souls for whom no gardens bloom
Save bitter buds of doom.

THE PEARL

How long shall it suffice

Merely to hoard in thine unequalled rays
The bright sequestered colours of the sun,
O pearl above all price,
And beautiful beyond all need of praise,
World-coveted but yet possessed of none,
Content in thy proud self-dominion?

Shall not some ultimate

And unknown hour deliver thee, and attest
Life's urgent and inviolable claim
To bind and consecrate
Thy glory on some pure and bridal breast,
Or set thee to enhance with flawless flame
A new-born nation's coronal of fame?

Or wilt thou self-denied

Forgo such sweet and sacramental ties
As weld Love's delicate bonds of ecstasy,
And in a barren pride
Of cold, unfruitful freedom that belies
The inmost secret of fine liberty
Return unblest into the primal sea?

THREE SORROWS

How shall I honour thee, O sacred grief?
Fain would my love transmute
My suffering into music and my heart
Into a deathless lute!

How shall I cherish thee, O precious pain?
Fain would my trembling hand
Fashion and forge of thee a deathless sword
To serve my stricken land!

And thou, sweet sorrow, terrible and dear,
Most bitter and divine?
O I will carve thee with deep agony
Into a deathless shrine!

KALI THE MOTHER

All Voices: O TERRIBLE and tender and divine!
O mystic mother of all sacrifice,
We deck the sombre altars of thy
 shrine
With sacred basil leaves and saffron
 rice;
All gifts of life and death we bring to
 thee,
 Uma Haimavati!

Maidens: We bring thee buds and berries from
 the wood!

Brides: We bring the rapture of our bridal
 prayer!

Mothers: And we the sweet travail of mother-
 hood!

Widows: And we the bitter vigils of despair!

All Voices: All gladness and all grief we bring to
 thee,
 Ambika! Parvati!

Artisans: We bring the lowly tribute of our
toil!

Peasants: We bring our new-born goats and
budded wheat!

Victors: And we the swords and symbols of
our spoil!

Vanquished: And we the shame and sorrow of de-
feat!

All Voices: All triumph and all tears we bring to
thee,
Girija! Shambhavi!

Scholars: We bring the secrets of our ancient
arts.

Priests: We bring the treasures of our ageless
creeds.

Poets: And we the subtle music of our
hearts.

Patriots: And we the sleepless worship of our
deeds.

All Voices: All glory and all grace we bring to
thee,
*Kali! Maheshwari!*¹

¹ *These are some of the many names Eternal Mother of Hindu worship.*

AWAKE! ¹

(To Mohamed Ali Jinnab)

WAKEN, O mother! thy children implore thee,
Who kneel in thy presence to serve and adore thee!
The night is aflush with a dream of the morrow,
Why still dost thou sleep in thy bondage of sorrow?
Awaken and sever the woes that enthrall us,
And hallow our hands for the triumphs that call
us!

Are we not thine, O Belov'd, to inherit
The manifold pride and power of thy spirit?
Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,
Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine
altar.

Lo! we would thrill the high stars with thy story,
And set thee again in the forefront of glory.

Hindus: Mother! the flowers of our worship
 have crowned thee!

Parsees: Mother! 'the flame of our hope shall
 surround thee!

¹ Recited at the Indian National Congress, 1915.

Mussulmans: Mother! the sword of our love shall
defend thee!

Christians: Mother! the song of our faith shall
attend thee!

All Creeds: Shall not our dauntless devotion avail
thee?

Hearken! O queen and O goddess,
we hail thee!

THE FLOWERING YEAR

*"A light of laughing flowers along the grass is
spread"*

SHELLEY

THE CALL OF SPRING

(To Padmaja and Lilamani)

CHILDREN, my children, the spring wakes anew,
And calls through the dawn and the daytime
For flower-like and fleet-footed maidens like you,
To share in the joy of its playtime.

O'er hill-side and valley, through garden and grove,
Such exquisite anthems are ringing
Where rapturous bulbul and maina and dove
Their carols of welcome are singing.

I know where the ivory lilies unfold
In brooklets half-hidden in sedges,
And the air is aglow with the blossoming gold
Of thickets and hollows and hedges.

I know where the dragon-flies glimmer and glide,
And the plumes of wild peacocks are gleaming,
Where the fox and the squirrel and timid fawn hide
And the hawk and the heron lie dreaming.

The earth is ashine like a humming-bird's wing,
And the sky like a kingfisher's feather,
O come, let us go and play with the spring
Like glad-hearted children together.

THE COMING OF SPRING

O SPRING! I cannot run to greet
 Your coming as I did of old,
 Clad in a shining veil of gold,
With champa-buds and blowing wheat
And silver anklets on my feet.

Let others tread the flowering ways
 And pluck new leaves to bind their brows,
 And swing beneath the quickening boughs
A bloom with scented spikes and sprays
Of coral and of chrysoprase.

But if against this sheltering wall
 I lean to rest and lag behind,
 Think not my love untrue, unkind,
Or heedless of the luring call
To your enchanting festival.

O Sweet! I am not false to you—
 Only my weary heart of late
 Has fallen from its high estate
Of laughter and has lost the clue
To all the vernal joy it knew.

There was a song I used to sing—
But now I seek in vain, in vain
For the old lilting glad refrain—
I have forgotten everything—
Forgive me, O my comrade Spring!

Vasant Panchami Day, 1916

THE MAGIC OF SPRING

I BURIED my heart so deep, so deep,
Under a secret hill of pain,
And said: "O broken pitiful thing
Even the magic spring
Shall ne'er wake thee to life again,
Tho' March woods glimmer with opal rain
And passionate koels sing."

The kimshuks burst into dazzling flower,
The seemuls burgeoned in crimson pride,
The palm-groves shone with the oriole's wing,
The koels began to sing,
The soft clouds broke in a twinkling tide . . .
My heart leapt up in its grave and cried,
"Is it the spring, the spring?"

SUMMER WOODS

O I AM tired of painted roofs and soft and silken
floors,
And long for wind-blown canopies of crimson *gul-*
moburs!

O I am tired of strife and song and festivals and
fame,
And long to fly where cassia-woods are breaking
into flame.

Love, come with me where koels call from flower-
ing glade and glen,
Far from the toil and weariness, the praise and
prayers of men.

O let us fling all care away, and lie alone and dream
'Neath tangled boughs of tamarind and *molsari* and
neem!

And bind our brows with jasmine sprays and play
on carven flutes,
To wake the slumbering serpent-kings among the
banyan roots,

And roam at fall of eventide along the river's brink,
And bathe in water-lily pools where golden pan-
thers drink!

You and I together, Love, in the deep blossoming
woods
Engirt with low-voiced silences and gleaming soli-
tudes,

Companions of the lustrous dawn, gay comrades of
the night,
Like Krishna and like Radhika, encompassed with
delight.

JUNE SUNSET

HERE shall my heart find its haven of calm,
By rush-fringed rivers and rain-fed streams
That glimmer thro' meadows of lily and palm.
Here shall my soul find its true repose
Under a sunset sky of dreams
Diaphanous, amber and rose.
The air is aglow with the glint and whirl
Of swift wild wings in their homeward flight,
Sapphire, emerald, topaz, and pearl,
Afloat in the evening light.

A brown quail cries from the tamarisk bushes,
A bulbul calls from the cassia-plume,
And thro' the wet earth the gentian pushes
Her spikes of silvery bloom.
Where'er the foot of the bright shower passes
Fragrant and fresh delights unfold;
The wild fawns feed on the scented grasses,
Wild bees on the cactus-gold.

An ox-cart stumbles upon the rocks,
And a wistful music pursues the breeze
From a shepherd's pipe as he gathers his flocks

Under the *pipal*-trees.
And a young *Banjara* driving her cattle
Lifts up her voice as she glitters by
In an ancient ballad of love and battle
Set to the beat of a mystic tune,
And the faint stars gleam in the eastern sky
To herald a rising moon.

THE TIME OF ROSES

LOVE, it is the time of roses!
In bright fields and garden closes
How they burgeon and unfold!
How they sweep o'er tombs and towers
In voluptuous crimson showers
And untrammelled tides of gold!

How they lure wild bees to capture
All the rich mellifluous rapture
Of their magical perfume,
And to passing winds surrender
All their frail and dazzling splendour
Rivalling your turban-plume!

How they cleave the air adorning
The high rivers of the morning
In a blithe, bejewelled fleet!
How they deck the moonlit grasses
In thick rainbow-tinted masses
Like a fair queen's bridal sheet!

Hide me in a shrine of roses,
Drown me in a wine of roses

Drawn from every fragrant grove!
Bind me on a pyre of roses,
Burn me in a fire of roses,
Crown me with the rose of Love!

THE PEACOCK LUTE

SONGS FOR MUSIC

"Iram's soft lute, with sorrow in its strings"

OMAR KHAYYAM

SILVER TEARS

MANY tributes Life hath brought me,
Delicate and touched with splendour . . .
Of all gracious gifts and tender
She hath given no gift diviner
Than your silver tears of Sorrow
For my wild heart's suffering.

Many evils Time hath wrought me,
Happiness and health hath broken . . .
Of all joy or grief for token
He hath left no gift diviner
Than your silver tears of Sorrow,
For my wild heart's suffering.

CAPRICE

You held a wild-flower in your finger-tips,
Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,
Idly you tore its crimson leaves apart . . .
Alas! it was my heart.

You held a wine-cup in your finger-tips,
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,
Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl . . .
Alas! it was my soul.

DESTINY

It chanced on the noon of an April day
A dragon-fly passed in its sunward play
And furlèd his flight for a passing hour
To drain the life of a passion-flower. . . .
Who cares if a ruined blossom die,
O bright blue wandering dragon-fly?

Love came, with his ivory flute,
His pleading eye, and his wingèd foot:
"I am weary," he murmured; "O let me rest
In the sheltering joy of your fragrant breast."
At dawn he fled and he left no token. . . .
Who cares if a woman's heart be broken?

ASHOKA BLOSSOM

IF a lovely maiden's foot
Treads on the Ashoka root,
Its glad branches sway and swell,—
So our Eastern legends tell,—
Into gleaming flower,
Vivid clusters golden-red
To adorn her brow or bed
Or her marriage bower.

If your glowing foot be prest
O'er the secrets of my breast,
Love, my dreaming heart would wake,
And its joyous fancies break
Into lyric bloom
To enchant the passing world
With melodious leaves unfurled
And their wild perfume.

ATONEMENT

DEEP in a lonely garden on the hill
 Lulled by the low sea-tides,
A shadow set in shadows, soft and still,
 A wandering spirit glides,
 Smiting its pallid palms and making moan
 O let my Love atone!

Deep in a lonely garden on the hill
 Among the fallen leaves
A shadow lost in shadows, vague and chill,
 A wandering spirit grieves,
 Beating its pallid breast and making moan
 O let my Death atone!

LONGING

ROUND the sadness of my days
Breaks a melody of praise
Like a shining storm of petals,
Like a lustrous rain of pearls,
From the lutes of eager minstrels,
From the lips of glowing girls.

Round the sadness of my nights
Breaks a carnival of lights. . . .
But amid the gleaming pageant
Of life's gay and dancing crowd
Glides my cold heart like a spectre
In a rose-encircled shroud.

Love, beyond these lonely years
Lies there still a shrine of tears,
A dim sanctuary of sorrow
Where my grieving heart may rest,
And on some deep tide of slumber
Reach the comfort of your breast?

WELCOME

WELCOME, O fiery Pain!
My heart unseared, unstricken,
Drinks deep thy fervid rain,
My spirit-seeds to quicken.

Welcome, O tranquil Death!
Thou hast no ills to grieve me,
Who com'st with Freedom's breath
From sorrow to retrieve me.

Open, O vast Unknown,
Thy sealed mysterious portal!
I go to seek mine own,
Vision of Love immortal.

THE FESTIVAL OF MEMORY

DOth rapture hold a feast,
Doth sorrow keep a fast
For Love's dear memory
Whose sweetness shall outlast
The changing winds of Time,
Secret and unsurpassed?

Shall I array my heart
In Love's vermeil attire?
O shall I fling my life
Like incense in Love's fire?
Weep unto sorrow's lute?
Dance unto rapture's lyre?

What know the world's triune
Of gifts so strange as this
Twin-nurtured boon of Love,
Deep agony and bliss,
Fulfilment and farewell
Concentred in a kiss?

No worship dost thou need,
O miracle divine!

Silence and song and tears
Delight and dreams are thine,
Who mak'st my burning soul
Thy sacrament and shrine.

THE TEMPLE

A PILGRIMAGE OF LOVE

*"My passion shall burn as the flame of Salvation,
The flower of my love shall become the ripe fruit
of Devotion"*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I. THE GATE OF DELIGHT

I. THE OFFERING

WERE beauty mine, Beloved, I would bring it
Like a rare blossom to Love's glowing shrine;
Were dear youth mine, Beloved, I would fling it
Like a rich pearl into Love's lustrous wine.

Were greatness mine, Beloved, I would offer
Such radiant gifts of glory and of fame,
Like camphor and like curds to pour and proffer
Before Love's bright and sacrificial flame.

But I have naught save my heart's deathless passion
That craves no recompense divinely sweet,
Content to wait in proud and lowly fashion,
And kiss the shadow of Love's passing feet.

J 2. THE FEAST

BRING no fragrant sandal-paste,
Let me gather, Love, instead
The entranced and flowering dust
You have honoured with your tread
For mine eyelids and mine head.

Bring no scented lotus-wreath
Moon-awakened, dew-caressed;
Love, thro' memory's age-long dream
Sweeter shall my wild heart rest
With your foot-prints on my breast.

Bring no pearls from ravished seas,
Gems from rifled hemispheres;
Grant me, Love, in priceless boon
All the sorrow of your years,
All the secret of your tears.

3. ECSTASY

LET spring illumine the western hills with blossom-
ing brands of fire,
And wake with rods of budded flame the valleys of
the south—
But I have plucked you, O miraculous Flower of
my desire,
And crushed between my lips the burning petals of
your mouth!

Let spring unbind upon the breeze tresses of rich
perfume
To lure the purple honey-bees to their enchanted
death—

But sweeter madness drives my soul to swift and
sweeter doom
For I have drunk the deep, delicious nectar of your
breath!

Let spring unlock the melodies of fountain and of
flood,
And teach the wingèd word of man to mock the
wild bird's art,
But wilder music thrilled me when the rivers of
your blood
Swept o'er the flood-gates of my life to drown my
waiting heart!

4. THE LUTE-SONG

WHY need you a burnished mirror of gold,
O bright and imperious face?
Mine eyes be the shadowless wells of desire
For the sun of your glory and grace!

Why need you the praises of ivory lutes,
O proud and illustrious name?
My voice be the journeying lute of delight
For the song of your valour and fame!

Why need you pavilions and pillows of silk,
Soft foot-cloths of azure, O Sweet?

My heart be your tent and your pillow of rest,
And a place of repose for your feet!

Why need you sad penance or pardon or prayer
For life's passion and folly and fears?
My soul be your living atonement, O Love,
In the flame of immutable years!

5. IF YOU CALL ME

IF you call me I will come
 Swifter, O my Love,
Than a trembling forest deer
 Or a panting dove,
Swifter than a snake that flies
 To the charmer's thrall . . .
If you call me I will come
 Fearless what befall.

If you call me, I will come
 Swifter than desire,
Swifter than the lightning's feet
 Shod with plumes of fire.
Life's dark tides may roll between,
 Or Death's deep chasms divide—
If you call me I will come
 Fearless what betide.

6. THE SINS OF LOVE

FORGIVE me the sin of mine eyes,
O Love, if they dared for a space
Invade the dear shrine of your face
With eager, insistent delight,
Like wild birds intrepid of flight
That raid the high sanctuaried skies—
O pardon the sin of mine eyes!

Forgive me the sin of my hands . . .
Perchance they were bold overmuch
In their tremulous longing to touch
Your beautiful flesh, to caress,
To clasp you, O Love, and to bless
With gifts as uncounted as sands—
O pardon the sin of my hands!

Forgive me the sin of my mouth,
O Love, if it wrought you a wrong,
With importunate silence or song
Assailed you, encircled, oppress'd,
And ravished your lips and your breast
To comfort its anguish of drouth—
O pardon the sin of my mouth!

Forgive me the sin of my heart,
If it trespassed against you and strove

To lure or to conquer your love
Its passionate love to appease,
To solace its hunger and ease
The wound of its sorrow or smart—
O pardon the sin of my heart!

7. THE DESIRE OF LOVE

O COULD I brew my Soul like Wine
To make you strong,
O could I carve you Freedom's sword
Out of my song!

Instil into your mortal flesh
Immortal breath,
Triumphantly to conquer Life
And trample Death.

What starry height of sacrifice
Were left untrod,
So could my true love fashion you
Into a God?

8. THE VISION OF LOVE

O LOVE! my foolish heart and eyes
Have lost all knowledge save of you,

And everywhere—in blowing skies
And flowering earth—I find anew
The changing glory of your face
The myriad symbols of your grace.

To my enraptured sight you are
Sovereign and sweet reality,
The splendour of the morning star,
The might and music of the sea,
The subtle fragrance of the spring,
Rich fruit of all Time's harvesting.

O Love! my foolish soul and sense
Have lost all vision save of you,
My sacred fount of sustenance
From which my spirit drinks anew
Sorrow and solace, hope and power
From life to life and hour to hour.

O poignant sword! O priceless crown,
O temple of my woe and bliss!
All pain is compassed by your frown.
All joy is centred in your kiss.
You are the substance of my breath
And you the mystic pang of Death.

II. THE PATH OF TEARS

I. THE SORROW OF LOVE

WHY did you turn your face away?
Was it for grief or fear
Your strength would fail or your pride grow weak,
If you touched my hand, if you heard me speak,
After a life-long year?

Why did you turn your face away?
Was it for love or hate?
Or the spell of that wild miraculous hour
That hurled our souls with relentless power
In the eddying fires of Fate?

Turn not your face from me, O Love!
Shall Sorrow or Death conspire
To set our suffering spirits free
From the passionate bondage of Memory
Or the thrall of the old desire?

2. THE SILENCE OF LOVE

SINCE thus I have endowed you with the whole
Joy of my flesh and treasure of my soul,

And your life debt to me looms so supreme,
Shall my love wax ungenerous as to seem
By sign or supplication to demand
An answering gift from your reluctant hand?

Give what you will . . . if aught be yours to give!
But tho' you are the breath by which I live
And all my days are a consuming pyre
Of unaccomplished longing and desire,
How shall my love beseech you or beset
Your heart with sad remembrance and regret?

Quenched are the fervent words I yearn to speak
And tho' I die, how shall I claim or seek
From your full rivers one reviving shower,
From your resplendent years one single hour?
Still for Love's sake I am foredoomed to bear
A load of passionate silence and despair.

3. THE MENACE OF LOVE

How long, O Love, shall ruthless pride avail you
Or wisdom shield you with her gracious wing,
When the sharp winds of memory shall assail you
In all the poignant malice of the spring?

All the sealed anguish of my blood shall taunt you
In the rich menace of red-flowering trees;

The yearning sorrow of my voice shall haunt you
In the low wailing of the midnight seas.

The tumult of your own wild heart shall smite you
With strong and sleepless pinions of desire,
The subtle hunger in your veins shall bite you
With swift and unrelenting fangs of fire.

When youth and spring and passion shall betray you
And mock your proud rebellion with defeat,
God knows, O Love, if I shall save or slay you
As you lie spent and broken at my feet!

4. LOVE'S GUERDON

FIERCE were the wounds you struck me, O my Love,
And bitter were the blows! . . .
Sweeter from your dear hands all suffering
Than rich love-tokens other comrades bring
Of crimson oleander and of rose.

Cold was your cruel laughter, O my Love,
And cruel were your words! . . .
Sweeter such harshness on your lips than all
Love-orisons from tender lips that fall,
And soft love-music of chakora-birds.

You plucked my heart and broke it, O my Love,
And bleeding, flung it down! . . .
Sweeter to die thus trodden of your feet,
Than reign apart upon an ivory seat
Crowned in a lonely rapture of renown.

5. IF YOU WERE DEAD

If you were dead I should not weep!
How sweetly would my sad heart rest
Close-gathered in a dreamless sleep
Among the garlands on your breast,
Happy at last and comforted
If you were dead!

For life is like a burning veil
That keeps our yearning souls apart,
Cold Fate a wall no hope may scale,
And pride a severing sword, Sweetheart!
And love a wide and troubled sea
'Twixt you and me.

If you were dead I should not weep—
How sweetly would our hearts unite
In a dim, undivided sleep,
Locked in Death's deep and narrow night,
All anger fled, all sorrow past,
O Love, at last!

6. SUPPLICATION

LOVE, it were not such deep unmeasured wrong
To wreck my life of youth and all delight,
Bereave my days of sweetness and to blight
My hidden wells of slumber and of song,
Had your atoning mercy let me keep
For sole and sad possession to assuage
The loss of my heart's radiant heritage,
Power of such blessed tears as mortals weep.

But I, O Love, am like a withered leaf
Burnt in devouring noontides of distress
And tossed upon dim pools of weariness,
Mute to the winds of gladness or of grief.
The changing glory of the earth and skies
Kindles no answering tribute in my breast,
My loving dead go streamwards to their rest
Unhonoured by the homage of mine eyes.

Restore me not the rapture that is gone,
The hope forbidden and the dream denied,
The ruined purpose and the broken pride,
Lost kinship with the starlight and the dawn.
But you whose proud, predestined hands control
My springs of sorrow, ecstasy and power,
Grant in the brief compassion of an hour
A gift of tears to save my stricken soul!

7. THE SLAYER

LOVE, if at dawn some passer-by should say,
"Lo! doth thy garment drip with morning dew?
Thy face perchance is drenched with cold sea-spray,
Thy hair with fallen rain?"

Make answer: "*Nay,
These be the death-drops from sad eyes I slew
With the quick torch of pain.*"

And if at dusk a reveller should cry,
"What rare vermilion vintage hast thou spilled,
Or is thy robe splashed with the glowing dye
Of some bruised crimson leaf?"

O Love reply:
"*These be the life-drops of a heart I killed
With the swift spear of grief.*"

8. THE SECRET

THEY come, sweet maids and men with shining
tribute,
Garlands and gifts, cymbals and songs of praise. . . .
How can they know I have been dead, Beloved,
These many mournful days?

Or that my delicate dreaming soul lies trampled
Like crushed ripe fruit, chance-trodden of your
feet,

And how you flung the throbbing heart that loved
you
To serve wild dogs for meat?

They bring me saffron veils and silver sandals
Rich crowns of honour to adorn my head—
For none save you may know the tragic secret,
O Love, that I am dead!

III. THE SANCTUARY

I. THE FEAR OF LOVE

O COULD my love devise
A shield for you from envious lips and eyes
That desecrate the sweetness of your days
With tumults of their praise!

O could my love design
A secret, sealed, invulnerable shrine
To hide you, happy and inviolate,
From covetous Time and Fate.

Love, I am drenched with fear
Lest the uncounted avarice of the year
Add to the triumph of all garnered grace
The rapture of your face!

I tremble with despair
Lest the far-journeying winds and sunbeams bear
Bright rumours of your luring brows and breath
Unto the groves of Death.

What sanctuary can I pledge
Whose very love of you is sacrilege?
O I would save you from the ravening fire
Of my own heart's desire!

2. THE ILLUSION OF LOVE

BELOVED, you may be as all men say
 Only a transient spark
Of flickering flame set in a lamp of clay—
I care not . . . since you kindle all my dark
With the immortal lustres of the day.

And as all men deem, dearest, you may be
 Only a common shell
Chance-winnowed by the sea-winds from the sea—
I care not . . . since you make most audible
The subtle murmurs of eternity.

And tho' you are, like men of mortal race,
 Only a hapless thing
That Death may mar and destiny efface—
I care not . . . since unto my heart you bring
The very vision of God's dwelling-place.

3. THE WORSHIP OF LOVE

CRUSH me, O Love, betwixt thy radiant fingers
Like a frail lemon leaf or basil bloom,
Till aught of me that lives for thee or lingers
Be but the wraith of memory's perfume,
And every sunset wind that wandereth
Grow sweeter for my death!

Burn me, O Love, as in a glowing censer
Dies the rich substance of a sandal grain,
Let my soul die till nought but an intenser
Fragrance of my deep worship doth remain—
And every twilight star shall hold its breath
And praise thee for my death!

4. LOVE TRIUMPHANT

IF your fair mind were quenched with dark distress,
Your dear hands stained with fierce blood-guiltiness,
Or your sweet flesh fell rotting from the bone,
Should not my deep unchanging love atone
And shield you from the sore decree of Fate
And the world's storm of horror and of hate?

What were to me your dire disease or crime,
The scorn of men, the cold revenge of Time?

Has life a suffering still I shall not dare,
Love, for your sake to conquer or to bear,
If I might yield you solace, succour, rest,
And hush your awful anguish on my breast?

5. LOVE OMNIPOTENT

O LOVE, is there aught I should fail to achieve for
your sake?

Your need would invest my frail hands with in-
vincible power

To tether the dawn and the darkness, to trample
and break

The mountains like sea-shells, and crush the fair
moon like a flower,

And drain the wide rivers as dew-drops and pluck
from the skies

The sunbeams like arrows, the stars like proud im-
potent eyes.

O Love, is there aught I should fear to fulfil at your
word?

Your will my weak hands with such dauntless de-
light would endow

To capture and tame the wild tempest to sing like a
bird,

And bend the swift lightning to fashion a crown for
your brow,

Unfurl the sealed triumph of Time like a foot-cloth
 outspread,
And rend the cold silence that conquers the lips of
 the dead.

6. LOVE TRANSCENDENT

WHEN Time shall cease and the world be ended
And Fate unravel the judgment scroll,
And God shall hear—by His hosts attended—
The secret legend of every soul,

And each shall pass to its place appointed,
And yours to His inmost paradise,
To sit encrowned 'mid the peace-anointed,
O my saint with the sinless eyes!

My proud soul shall be unforgiven
For a passionate sin it will ne'er repent,
And I shall be doomed, O Love, and driven
And hurled from Heaven's high battlement,

Down the deep ages, alone, unfrightened,
Flung like a pebble thro' burning space;
But the speed of my fall shall be sweet and bright-
 ened

By the memoried joy of your radiant face!

Whirled like a leaf from æon to æon,
Tossed like a feather from flame to flame
Love, I shall chant a glorious pæan,
And thrill the dead with your deathless name.

So you be safe in God's mystic garden,
Inclosed like a star in His ageless skies,
My outlawed spirit shall crave no pardon,—
O my saint with the sinless eyes!

7. INVOCATION

STOOP not from thy proud, lonely sphere,
Star of my Trust!
But shine implacable and pure,
Serene and just;
And bid my struggling spirit rise
Clean from the dust!

Still let thy chastening wrath endure.
O be thou still
A radiant and relentless flame,
A crucible
To shatter and to shape anew
My heart and will.

Still be thy scorn the burning height
My feet must tread,

Still be thy grief the bitter crown
That bows my head,
Thy stern, arraigning silences
My daily bread!

So shall my yearning love at last
Grow sanctified,
Thro' sorrow find deliverance
From mortal pride,
So shall my soul, redeemed, re-born,
Attain thy side.

8. DEVOTION

TAKE my flesh to feed your dogs if you choose,
Water your garden-trees with my blood if you will,
Turn my heart into ashes, my dreams into dust—
Am I not yours, O Love, to cherish or kill?

Strangle my soul and fling it into the fire!
Why should my true love falter or fear or rebel?
Love, I am yours to lie in your breast like a flower,
Or burn like a weed for your sake in the flame of
hell.

THE END

